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THE BEAUTY OF THE SAVIOUR

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THE BEAUTY OF THE SAVIOUR

BY THE

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Christ's Beauty



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The Beauty of the Saviour

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Preface

“**T**HE beauty of the Saviour.” It is a theme which stirs the heart and makes the most glowing and vivid language seem cold and colourless. These selected addresses, the result of many years’ ministry in London and Birmingham, are totally inadequate, but if only they serve, however imperfectly, to fix the reader’s attention upon Christ Himself they will not have been written in vain. “We would see Jesus” is the inarticulate cry of many hearts that are conscious of frequent hunger within. May we who have seen the King in His beauty so live that the most unbelieving may be convinced that “strength, joy and willingness” for all the will of God come with that sight.

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PART I

Foreshadowed in the Old Testament

I

GRACE AND LOYALTY

And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the House of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake. . . . Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him ? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son, which is lame on his feet. . . . He is in the house of Machir in Lo-debar. Then King David sent and fetched him. . . . And David said unto him, Fear not : for I will surely show thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father ; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And he did obeisance and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am. . . . As for Mephibosheth, said the king, he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons.—2 SAM. ix. 1-8, 10.

And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king, and he had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came home in peace. . . . And the king said, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters ? I say thou and Ziba divide the land. And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come in peace unto his own house.—2 SAM. xix. 24, 29, 30.

Grace and Loyalty

ONE hardly knows which to admire most. The grace shown by David or the steadfast loyalty exhibited under most distressing circumstances, well calculated, one would think, to drive him to treachery, by Mephibosheth. Surely the peculiar loyalty of the servant was the result of the peculiar graciousness of the Master. The manifestation of the undeserved favour and goodness of God is the only cure for human depravity.

Mephibosheth was of the House of Saul, and Saul had been David's chief enemy. For seven years David's life had been a burden to him while he was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains. Saul's hatred of David was almost a mania. It would neither yield to reason nor be overcome by kindness. Even after David had once and again spared his life to show that he had no ill-will towards him, Saul's violent and deep-rooted hatred of David broke out as fiercely as ever.

It is to men who are filled with a deep-rooted unreasonable hatred of God that the kindness of God is manifested in the gift of His Son.

Does it seem to you an exaggeration to speak of any persons hating God? Christ said plainly, "Every one that doeth evil hateth the Light." The

second commandment speaks of God visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Him. They are to be found among Christians as well as among Jews. True, the hatred slumbers quietly in the hearts of those who have been brought up under Christian influences, but as gunpowder explodes when a spark reaches it, so this latent hatred blazes forth into prejudiced criticism and bitter contempt of God's word and commandment under the test of some sudden calamity or sore temptation.

Never forget your parentage. Be devoutly and humbly thankful to God if your immediate ancestors were godly and Christian people, but remember you are also a child of Adam and from him you inherit the carnal mind, a spirit of enmity against God.

Now in his early days a serious misfortune had overtaken Mephibosheth. When only five years old, on the very day that Saul and Jonathan fell on Mount Gilboa, Mephibosheth fell from the arms of a careless nurse fleeing in terror from the Philistines, and owing to the lack of proper treatment (there were no hospitals in those days) he had grown up a helpless cripple, lame on both his feet. So he is an exact picture of us fallen sinners. We are not only guilty, we are also depraved. Our title to Heaven we forfeited through Adam's sin, and all hope of winning it back is destroyed by our weakness and depravity. We are lame of both feet. Our hearts are corrupt and our minds are darkened. Our whole nature is crooked, we cannot run in the way of God's commandments, we stumble over every upward step like a helpless cripple.

To complete the picture, notice where Mephibosheth lived. It was in Lodebar, which means lacking pasture. So every sinner is without righteousness, without strength and without satisfaction

or peace. We spend our money for that which is not bread, our labour for that which satisfieth not.

The course of sin, which seems so easy and so pleasant, fails to give us any real satisfaction. We know that we are meant for something better than the house of Machir in Lodebar, but we have no power to raise ourselves.

To this Mephibosheth then the kindness of God was to be shown by David. See on what it was based. It was "for Jonathan's sake." It was all the outcome of a covenant made many years previously between David and Jonathan. Jonathan was entirely free from his father's hatred and suspicion of David. As soon as Jonathan met David "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David and he loved him as his own soul." So when Jonathan found it impossible to turn aside his father's wrath against David, instead of siding with his father he entered into a solemn league or covenant with David. And this was part of the covenant: "Thou shalt not only while I live show me the kindness of the Lord that I die not, but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever; not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth."

There is, thank God, another Jonathan who has covenanted on behalf of sinners and for whose sake the kindness of God is shown to the fallen sons of a rebellious race. According to the old covenant with Adam thy life is forfeited because of sin, but according to the new covenant with Jesus Christ by which He undertook to redeem mankind, making atonement for sin with His own blood, thy life is spared and thou art restored to the inheritance of the Sons of Light. It is for our Jonathan's sake we are forgiven; because of the eternal covenant which shall never be suspended or superseded, the covenant

between God the Father and God the Son sealed and ratified by the blood which was shed for the remission of sins, executed and administered by God the Holy Ghost to every believing heart. Under the terms of that covenant forgiveness, life and eternal glory are offered without money and without price to those who are enemies of God by wicked works. The kindness of God shall reach thee, as surely as it reached Mephibosheth if you will receive it not as your right and desert, but as pure unmerited favour shown to you for Christ's sake.

Mephibosheth seems to have clearly understood that he had no claim in himself to David's favour. "What is thy servant," he said, "that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?" He was not alluding to his helplessness as a cripple but to his guilt as one of the house of Saul. "All of my father's house," he said on another occasion, "were but dead men before my lord the king." We shall never experience the full kindness of God until we make the same confession. While you cling to any fancied merits of your own you will never receive the saving grace, the royal and distinguishing love of our Heavenly Father. Abandon the old covenant of works and all thought of claiming blessing as your own right and desert, come under the new covenant of grace and then, for the sake of Him whose love for thee brought Him to Calvary to die for thy sins, the full kindness of God will be shown to thee.

Then all the grace that David showed to Mephibosheth, God will show to thee. Did Mephibosheth come seeking for mercy? How could he, he was lame on both his feet. But David inquired after Mephibosheth and sent for him and had him brought into his presence. So the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

He, the true Good Samaritan, comes to the wounded

sinner where he is, to bind up his wounds and pour in oil and wine. All the way to Bethlehem and on to Calvary came the Son of God seeking sinners.

And what a welcome awaited Mephibosheth when he came to David. Complete restoration of his forfeited inheritance and a seat at the king's table as one of the king's sons. True, he did not lose his helplessness, but he had the king to lean upon, the king's bounty to provide for him, the king's strong arm to protect him. It was no measured or straitened bounty that king David lavished upon him, his heart opened to him as it had opened to Jonathan, and not as a released prisoner but as a king's son he did eat bread continually at the king's table. When we love people we like to have them continually in our sight. David loved Mephibosheth, and four times over this is set forth as the crowning evidence of David's royal kindness "He shall eat continually at my table as one of the king's sons."

Such is God's welcome to sinners.

"The love wherewith He loves the Son
Such is His love to thee."

Hast thou taken thy place at the King's table as one of the King's sons? Do not fear to draw near. The lame feet do not show beneath the table. Christ the mercy seat, the propitiation for our sins, covers all our infirmities. But it is a shocking return for all God's kindness if you have no appetite or relish for the royal fare, if you do not delight both through the word and through the sacrament to feed upon Christ.

Was Mephibosheth spoilt by all this kindness? Far from it. He did not receive the grace of king David in vain. His name means the "scatterer of the shameful thing," and all shameful pride and ingratitude were cast out of his heart. He responded with true humility and magnificent loyalty. A dead

dog Mephibosheth felt himself to be, nevertheless he took his seat at the table as a king's son. It is never humility that keeps us from accepting God's free and full salvation but only a subtle form of pride.

And his loyalty stood the severest test imaginable and was displayed in a noble and princely manner.

When David fled from Jerusalem at the insurrection of Absalom, Mephibosheth was left behind owing to the treachery of his servant Ziba. Ziba, however, went to meet David, and having ingratiated himself by means of a liberal present, accused his master Mephibosheth of sympathizing with the rebellion of Absalom and cherishing hopes that he might be lifted by it to the throne of Israel. David believed the cruel slander and rewarded Ziba by bestowing upon him his master's land. News of this would doubtless reach Mephibosheth, and he saw himself condemned unheard and openly disgraced. A less loyal heart would surely have stumbled over this injustice. Mephibosheth never swerved. To show his sympathy with the exiled king he refused to dress his feet or trim his beard or wash his clothes until such time as David should return in peace. And when David did return and learned the mistake he had made, a further trial awaited Mephibosheth. Instead of punishing Ziba for his cruel slander David compromised. "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters. I say thou and Ziba divide the land." A most ungenerous and unjust decision, showing how terribly David's own sin had incapacitated him for strong evenhanded justice. But Mephibosheth showed no resentment or annoyance. The joy of welcoming back the king who had done so much for him made him utterly indifferent to any thought of earthly gain. "Yea, let him take all," he answered, "forasmuch as my lord the king is come in peace unto his own house." I care not

who has the land so long as I have my lord the king.

It is a poor loyalty that can only be true to a reigning and victorious monarch. It is a poor loyalty that cannot at the call of duty dispense with all earthly recompense, finding full satisfaction and reward in the love of the King Himself. "Our King is now rejected and by the world disowned." We are called to suffer with Him now. We are exposed to slander and loss for His Name's sake. But our King has come to His own in Heaven. There He is already crowned with glory and honour. We cannot afford to be disloyal to Him. For His sake we will gladly deny ourselves and take up our cross daily. We can cheerfully let the false Zibas have the land, it is enough for us that we have the King.

II

SEEING AND BELIEVING

When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train ; . . . and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions ; there was not anything hid from the king, which he told her not. And when the Queen of Sheba had seen all . . . ; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came and mine eyes had seen it ; and behold the half was not told me : thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. . . . And king Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty.—1 KINGS x. 1-7, 13.

The Queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it ; for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, ^a greater than Solomon is here.—ST. MATT. xii. 42.

Seeing and Believing

THIS Queen of Sheba would not rest content with secondhand knowledge. The reports she had heard of the glory of Solomon had awakened in her intense longings and hopes. But they were only reports, and might prove to be exaggerated and untrue. So with a wholesome reserve she believed not the words until she came and saw, and then, "Behold, the half was not told me," was her emphatic testimony. The report was no exaggeration, but fell far short of the plain truth.

Her example is worth following. Never rest content with secondhand knowledge. The great crisis is past, and the Christian life begins in its full beauty and strength when hearing gives place to seeing and the glory of the living Christ becomes a present fact and the governing factor in the daily life. It was so with the patriarch Job. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." It was so with the prophet Isaiah. "Woe is me for I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." It was so with the aged Simeon. "Now, Lord, lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." There is something lacking in your experience unless you can say, "Mine eyes have seen." It is the eternal distinction between the world and

the Church, the children of the age and the children of eternity. "The world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me." Christ is hidden from the world: sometimes behind the ethics of modern philosophy, sometimes behind the Virgin Mary and lesser deities of the false Church, sometimes behind the glamour of gold and the attractions of worldly pleasures. But Christ is revealed to loyal hearts. "And this," said Jesus, "is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him should have eternal life."

Have you thus seen the Son? Has the glory of Jesus been so revealed to you as to capture your heart and deprive sin and the world of their power to allure you? Or is your knowledge of Jesus Christ still secondhand, unconvincing, unsatisfying, ineffectual?

This visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon is a clear type of that coming to Jesus which is the essence of true personal religion. Our Lord Himself suggests the parallel. With a clear consciousness of His own supremacy and ability to meet the needs of all human souls such as in any fallible man would be insufferable egotism, Christ declared that for failing to follow the example of the Queen of Sheba and hastening to learn and receive of Him as she did from Solomon, that generation would be condemned in the day of judgment. "Greater than Solomon," Christ called Himself, and so He was. He was the true Son of David, declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead. He was the true Solomon or peaceful one, for He made peace by the blood of His Cross. He is the Builder of the Temple that can never be destroyed, the true Church, His mystical Body; "the blessed company of all faithful people," whether Anglican or Lutheran or Roman.

His are the inexhaustible riches, His the infallible wisdom, His the imperishable glory. Beware then lest the condemnation which Christ foretold for the men of His generation fall on you. You have heard of the glory of Jesus Christ, all Christendom rings with His praise. Have you followed the example of this Queen of Sheba? Is this glory of Jesus still a mere report, a tradition, thank God, of your childhood, for you were not born of heathen parents; or has it been tested by personal experience and become a matter of first hand knowledge?

We take this Queen of Sheba then as a model seeker after truth, one of those sincere and genuine souls of whom Jesus said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."

1. She was true to the needs of her own heart. As a great queen, she might easily have become engrossed in State affairs or in the pleasures of Court life. But she would not allow even the din of an empire to drown the voice of her own heart. Spiritual suicide is seriously urged in some quarters as the ideal of true religion. People are urged to forget all about their own souls and care or pretend to care for other people only. This Queen of Sheba put everything else aside until her inner life had been put right. For though a queen she was not satisfied. Questions kept coming before her which she dared not set aside and could not answer.

They became all the more urgent after hearing of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord. She heard how Palestine was enjoying freedom from war, and that the God of Israel had commissioned this Solomon, the peaceful one, to build His temple in Jerusalem the city of peace. So the questions came surging through her mind: What am I? What is life? What is death? What is sin? Can sin be forgiven? Is there peace

in this life? Is prayer any good? Can the heart find rest? Burdened with the cares of government, watching the lives of her subjects, sad and patient like all Easterns, she longed for some note of peace, some assurance of victory in the battle of life.

Will you begin at once to be true to the needs of your own heart? You need God, and rest, and victory over sin. You need the Love that passeth knowledge and the Peace that passeth all understanding. You cannot afford to do without these, even though it would give you a kingdom and a throne like the Queen of Sheba's. You must be a true soul before you can be a good sovereign, however limited your realm. And you cannot be a true soul until the cry of your heart is hearkened to, and the questions you cannot answer bring you to the feet of Jesus Christ.

2. This Queen of Sheba proved her sincerity by making a personal inquiry. This was no easy matter. She had to journey all the way from Arabia to seek an interview with Solomon. She had not received any invitation, but a formal visit from the sovereign of a friendly state would of course be regarded as a courteous compliment. She was in such dead earnest that she travelled some 1,500 miles from the far South in order to prosecute her inquiries in person. She felt it would not do to inquire by means of an ambassador. She must put her own questions.

No man can put another's questions, for no man can read another's heart. You can never be saved by proxy. The hunger of your heart will never be met until you make personal application to Jesus Christ. And you must take trouble over it. Those who never put themselves to any trouble seldom get their questions answered.

Of course you can hear the Gospel without travell-

ing 1,500 miles. But with many there is a barrier between them and Jesus Christ more difficult to overcome than 1,500 miles of space. It is the barrier of nearly 1,900 years. The Bible seems such ancient history. It deals with a state of society so different to ours. It is an Eastern book wearing an Eastern dress and its teaching is full of reference to Jewish customs and ideas. The education which can perfectly understand Tennyson or Browning is often utterly at a loss in reading the New Testament. Those who would find Christ in the Bible must take real pains to master the history of Genesis and Exodus and the types of Leviticus or they will never understand either the Gospels or the Epistles. You might as well expect to understand the differential calculus by the light of Nature as think to understand the Bible without giving years to patient systematic study of it. If you want peace with God and victory over sin, start reading your Bible and refuse to open another book or newspaper until God's voice from the inspired word has reached your soul. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." When the word of God was rare and precious, men studied it and meditated upon it night and day. Now that the Bible is in everybody's hands men think they know it because they can quote a few odd verses, though they have taken no pains to master its deep teaching. They will not take the trouble to make a personal inquiry. Certainly the Queen of Sheba will rise and condemn all such.

3. This Queen was genuinely true in her private interview with Solomon. "She communed with him of all that was in her heart." She had not meant to do this. Her questions had been carefully prepared, all couched in general terms and in the third person. How can one explain this? How can one answer this? How should one act under

these circumstances? But when she came to Solomon it was no longer "How can one?" but "How can I?" She felt at once that her disguise was penetrated. Solomon read her heart and drew out with perfect tact all her personal longing and unrest.

Do be true in your dealings with God. Never attempt to wear a mask in God's presence. Unbosom all your need. This is the crux of the whole matter. Men are not slow, as a rule, in putting questions. But they like to approach the subject of salvation in an academical way as an interesting matter for discussion, a matter which they can deal with from the outside as an onlooker or friendly critic. You can never get near to God while you adopt this attitude. As soon as you really draw near to God you find out that you are personally involved. You are the guilty culprit needing propitiation and forgiveness, you are the sick and helpless one needing the Good Physician's touch. You can never have a satisfactory interview with God until you take your right place. King Solomon told the Queen of Sheba all her questions. Her heart was laid bare before him like a book and he read every page of it. So Christ satisfieth the longing soul and filleth the hungry soul with goodness. But you too must commune with Him of all that is in your heart.

4. The Queen of Sheba was true in the confession she made of her former unbelief. She was a sincere, candid and wholehearted seeker, but she was an unbeliever when she came to Jerusalem. She describes to Solomon how her faith, overtaxed by the wonderful reports she had heard, refused point blank to believe them. "I believed not the words until I came and mine eyes had seen." "It cannot be true," she argued. "It can never be given to one

man to possess all wisdom and knowledge." But she did not sit down in unbelief and indifference. How could she be indifferent when so much was at stake. Perhaps the whole story was an exaggeration, it did seem too good to be true. But it was so good if true that she dared not postpone inquiry. Her heart was so stirred at the prospect opened up by this report that the very possibility of it being a heavenly reality and not a phantom of earth made the long and tedious journey a delight.

Such unbelief is most wholesome. It is the unbelief of those who are staggered at the greatness of the gospel message. Have you ever been thus staggered? Has it come home to you as the greatest wonder in the world that God should love sinners? Have you ever when listening to the joyful tidings of a Saviour able to save to the uttermost, of a God willing to forgive and forget all your sins, of a Throne of Grace to which all needy souls may flee for succour—said in your heart, "It is too good to be true, I cannot believe it"? Solomon was not vexed when the Queen of Sheba said, "I believed not the words." It is the blind unbelief that sees no glory in Redeeming Love that deserves rebuke, not the weak faith that is so dazzled by it that it can hardly believe it to be true.

Tell me, if you like, that God cannot forgive sins, that sinners have no claim upon Him, that there is nothing in you for God to love, that while you loathe your own sins they are a hundredfold more loathsome to God; tell me, if you like, that you cannot see how Christ came to love you and to die for you, that it is all too marvellously good to be true. But come to Jesus and see for yourself. It is the unbelief that stays away from Christ, not caring whether it be true or not, that destroys souls for that unbelief is rooted in indifference. The unbelief that

hurries up to Christ, overcoming all obstacles, braving persecution and ridicule perhaps, but setting everything aside until the question be settled whether Christ can or cannot meet the needs of sinful men, that unbelief is the precursor of an assured and triumphant faith. The gospel is, according to man's estimate, too good to be true, but make your way to Bethlehem and Calvary and you will find that the story is as true as it is wonderful, yea that "the half has never been told" of the glory and grace of Jesus Christ.

The effect will be the same with you as with the Queen of Sheba. Her questions were answered, her heart was satisfied, her unbelief vanished and "there was no more spirit in her." She died to herself when she had a full view of the glory of Solomon. She went back to her own land with no thought of anything but the glory of Solomon. And after every season of communion with Jesus Christ our hearts are constrained to say—

Higher than the highest heaven,
 Deeper than the deepest sea,
 Lord, Thy love at last hath conquered,
 Grant me now my soul's petition
 None of self and all of Thee.

III

THE CAPTAIN OF THE LORD'S HOST

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand : and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries ? And he said, Nay ; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant ? And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Put off thy shoe from off thy foot ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so. . . . And the Lord said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.—JOSH. v. 13-15 and vi. 2.

The Captain of the Lord's Host

"SEE, I have given into thine hand Jericho."

This was indeed good news for Joshua. In spite of the many gracious promises and signal manifestations of Divine power, it seemed now as if the way of God's people was hopelessly blocked and their position one of extreme peril. For Jericho was an almost impregnable fortress. The site was one peculiarly adapted for defence, the city was strongly fortified, "walled up to heaven" the spies called it, and the men of Jericho were keen and experienced men of war. To launch an undisciplined host, unskilled in attack and without siege artillery, against such a city was to court disaster. Sore puzzled Joshua must have been as to how Jericho could be taken.

It certainly could not be left standing. It was in the direct line of their progress into Canaan. For the carrying out of the Divine plan and the fulfilment of God's promise to give them the land of their fathers it was absolutely necessary that this Jericho should be overthrown.

Although the wanderings in the desert had come to an end ; although by the passage over Jordan they had crossed the rubicon separating themselves from the provocation in the wilderness and committing themselves once more to the aggressive victorious life to which God had called them ; although they

had renewed their covenant with God by circumcising all the men of the younger generations and had begun to eat the old corn of the land ; what good could possibly come of it, what hope was there of possessing the promised land, until Jericho was taken ?

Do not be surprised then if you meet with a Jericho after crossing Jordan. You are called to "fight the good fight." The forces of evil are sure to concentrate and entrench themselves in some Jericho. Some besetting sin, some evil habit so easily learned but so hardly got rid of, is probably your Jericho, and you know that if you are to enjoy the promised land and enter into the deep blessedness of a life of fellowship with God, Jericho must be taken.

But how ? That was the question that puzzled Joshua as he sallied forth to reconnoitre. Taken, i.e. received as a gift, is the Divine answer. For to us to-day God says, "See, I have *given* into thine hand Jericho." Jericho then must be taken by faith.

But Jericho was a difficulty met with in the line of God's will. There are many difficulties in our lives which we make for ourselves. A good deal of the conflict in the lives of Christians is not Christian conflict. It is not part of the good fight of faith. It is rather part of the foolish rebellion of unbelief. For some thirty-eight years past Israel's course had been of this latter kind. The inspired chronicler, describing various triumphs of faith, sums up the history of the Israelites during this period in these two verses : "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Why is there no reference to the crossing of the Jordan and all the conflicts with the heathen nations to the east of Jordan ? Because these were not part of the good fight of faith. All

this wearisome wandering and conflict the Israelites brought upon themselves by refusing to go forward and enter the promised land when God first bade them to.

Never think then that you can escape difficulties by forsaking the pathway of God's will. You only increase and multiply them. It may be that for some sorely tried servants, soldiers honoured with solitary posts of peculiar hardship and difficulty, the onward course is marked by many a labour, many a conflict, many a tear. But the labour builds up a solid work, the conflict is full of spiritual triumph, the tears are sacred and treasured in God's bottle. As a rule, however, the way of obedience is a way of sunshine and gladness, and the way of disobedience is marked by labours that are fruitless, conflicts that are hopeless, and tears that are bitter indeed.

Of which kind are the difficulties in your life? Are they Jerichos to be taken by faith, or are they like that land of Edom which the Israelites had to compass with sorely discouraged hearts? To put the same question in another way. Where are you, in which of the three stages of Israel's pilgrimage; in Egypt, or in the wilderness, or in Canaan? Are you still in the house of bondage and exposed to the fierce heat of God's wrath against sin? If not in Egypt, if by God's mercy you have been "brought out" under the shelter of the sprinkled blood, are you in Canaan? Canaan does not mean Heaven, for there is no fighting and there are no Jerichos in Heaven. Canaan means a heavenly life on earth, a life of rest after wandering, of fulness after scarcity, of fellowship after provocation, of progress and victory after the weary "marking time" in the wilderness? Has the Lord made you to lie down in His green pastures? Are you living the overcoming life? Is your experience one of rest

and victory? For if neither in Egypt nor in Canaan, you are certainly in the wilderness, you are an unbelieving believer, limiting the Holy One of Israel and provoking God by your refusal to enter in. The victory of faith, the receiving of your Jericho as a gift from the Lord, is for those who have crossed the Jordan, who, believing that God is able, have entered into rest. For such there are four simple steps to victory, to blessed victory in daily life in which the power of God shall be as plainly manifested as in the overthrow of Jericho.

1. The first step is a new view of Jesus. Who was this Captain of the Lord's Host? Not certainly an angel, for He accepted Joshua's worship and demanded his reverent homage. It was the Angel of the Covenant. The second person in the Holy Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is always near Jericho. That is why these Jerichos are allowed. But for the Jerichos we might think that we could do without Jesus. Whenever you come to a Jericho lift up your eyes and you will there see Jesus. The full blessing which comes into the lives of many of God's servants is simply a second view of Jesus. Viewing Him not only as the Passover Lamb whose sprinkled blood frees us from condemnation, but as the ever present Commander-in-Chief whose presence is a guarantee of victory. As Jesus gave a second touch to one blind man by which he saw all things clearly, so there comes a second work of the Spirit, and newborn souls which at first dazzled by the splendour of redeeming love could only grasp the truth "He died for me," are led on to see the practical bearing upon the daily life of the twin facts, "He liveth for me," "He dwelleth in me."

2. This new view of Jesus leads to the superseding of self. Joshua made a mistake when he

first interrogated this unknown Warrior. "Art thou for us," he asked, "or for our adversaries." "Nay, not *for* you but *over* you," the answer came; not an ally or reinforcement, but "as Captain of the Host of the Lord am I now come." Hitherto Joshua had been captain. Now Joshua was to be superseded by Jesus. There is no victory till then. It was "holy ground," though beneath the walls of the cursed city, when Jesus came to take command of the campaign, and Joshua fell prostrate and fully surrendered at His feet. The good fight of faith can only be fought on holy ground. "Work out your own salvation" with reverence and godly fear, but keep on holy ground, "for it is God which worketh in you to will and to work of His good pleasure." There are two kinds of religious life, the life ἐκ ἑμαντοῦ, of myself, and the life ἐν χριστῷ in Christ; victory begins when self is superseded by Jesus and the living Christ becomes the centre and source of all our spiritual energies.

3. The third step is the definite and immediate output of resting faith. What do you think Joshua did when he heard the plain words, "See, I have given into thine hand Jericho"? Did he look to see if the walls and fortifications of the city had crumbled away? No, if he ventured to look up at all, he looked into the strong, calm face of the Captain of the Lord's Host who could not exaggerate or deceive. As he heard the words he entered into rest. All anxiety as to the capture of Jericho disappeared. Jesus had said, "I have given it into thine hand." That was enough; a deep-breathed Hallelujah rose from his glad free heart. So every word of Christ must be met with a definite and immediate appropriation of faith. A resting upon the promise and a casting away all fear, all expectation of defeat. Joshua rose up from that holy ground to regard

Jericho not any longer as a formidable obstacle but as a God-given opening. Even as St. Paul after his new view of Jesus could say, "I glory in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may spread a tabernacle over me." It would have been sheer unbelief if Joshua had gone on praying, "Do give me Jericho." The Lord had given and he had taken, and so long as he remained on holy ground Jericho was virtually overthrown. This is the blessed secret that has transfigured the experience of so many of God's people. The victory over sin which we cannot win by our own endeavours, however earnest and persevering, we may receive as a gift from Jesus Christ by faith, for just as much as the forgiveness of our sins it is part of the deliverance wrought for us at Calvary.

4. But this definite output of resting faith must be followed by the persevering obedience of faith. The walls did not fall down flat the moment Joshua rose to his feet. A week's marching lay before the army of Israel. The repose of faith is not always followed immediately by the manifestation of blessing. Jericho was given and taken seven days before the walls fell down. But all through that interval the Israelites treated Jericho as if it were their own. They walked quietly round it as if it were their own possession. This was their way of openly taking God's gift. A city cannot be taken with the hand as one would take a cheque or a purse. The triumphant march around the city day after day was their way of claiming the city as their own. And not until after the thirteenth time of marching round were they told to shout. This is where we often fail. In the excitement of the service or meeting we take our Jericho from the Saviour's hand, but we do not quietly walk round it all through the week. We do not keep up the reckoning of faith, we shout before

God tells us to. Naaman dipped himself in Jordan seven times. Elijah sent his servant seven times to the top of Carmel to look out for the answer to his prayers. We must believe and keep on believing, always reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God in Jesus Christ, always looking upon our Jericho as a city given unto our hand by the great Captain of our Salvation. Then the sequel will come true in our lives : " By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been compassed about for seven days."

IV

THE LORD'S ARROW OF VICTORY

Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died : and Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over him and said, My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof ! And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows : and he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow ; and he put his hand upon it : and Elisha laid his hands upon the king's hands. And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot : and he shot. And he said, The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria : for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. And he said, Take the arrows : and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground : and he smote thrice and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times ; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it : whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.—2 KINGS xiii. 14-19.

The Lord's Arrow of Victory

YOU see then the full measure of victory which God wants us to enjoy. "Thou shalt smite the Syrians till thou have consumed them." You see too the limited measure of victory which most Christians experience. "He smote thrice and stayed." Three big blessings and we think we have had all. Three successes over the enemy and we think we have done wonders. But the Saviour marvels that after all He went through for us, we should be content with such half measures.

This object lesson on the victory of faith was given at Elisha's deathbed. The young king had hastened to pay the aged prophet a last tribute of affection and esteem. Standing by his side and remembering all that the old man had done for his country, Joash wept over him and said, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" It was a high tribute of praise, the same that Elisha had offered to Elijah as he saw him carried up to Heaven. It was a great joy and solace to the dying prophet to receive from his sovereign's lips this testimony that he too had been a bulwark and a strength to the nation.

The cynic says that the world never values its greatest men till they are gone. It is so often, but not always. To every generation there come seasons

of illumination when the judgments of time approach more nearly to the standards of eternity, moments when the mists of earth are scattered and the light of eternity is so shed upon the dusty arena of human life that even the world recognizes the sterling worth and practical value of godliness. The approach of death often helps to bring this about. On other occasions king Joash would perhaps have laughed at Elisha as a narrow visionary and enthusiast; seeing him now on the borders of eternity he hails him as the champion and deliverer of the nation.

This praise was no exaggeration. The world can never measure how much it owes to its prophets, the men who see and help others to see the things of God. For upon character, not cleverness, depends a nation's highest welfare. Cleverness may seek the comfort of the present generation. Character teaches us to bear the burdens of the generations to come. If the laws of national progress follow the line of the highest good of the greatest number, then character must be the determining factor, because the greatest number are the generations unborn. Social philosophy thus endorses the teaching of Holy Scripture that righteousness exalteth a nation. The man who does most to build up the nation's faith in God is the truest friend to his country.

This is just what Elisha had done. The captive maid at Damascus was sure that her master would be healed of his leprosy if only he would go to the prophet in Samaria. Her confident faith was the direct result of Elisha's bright and consistent life. Happy they who in their childhood have known some true prophet, some honoured parent or loved pastor, whose consistent life and joyous faith made it easy for them to believe in God. We are all called to be prophets. We are all called to so live in the recognized presence of God that we shall make it easy for

those around us to believe in Him. It was by doing this Elisha had proved himself a bulwark and defence to Israel.

But sweet as it was to listen to such a tribute of praise, Elisha could not spend his last hours in accepting compliments, however sincere and well deserved. It was his last opportunity of stirring up Joash to fulfil the mission God had appointed for him. So this deathbed interview, one of the most striking of all the deathbed scenes in history, was made the occasion of an object lesson of untold value for all God's servants on God's way of victory. We glean from it four rules for complete victory in the Christian life.

1. Declare war against sin. Elisha breaks in upon the king's lamentations with the emphatic words, "Take bow and arrows." It is time not for weeping but for warring. Joash had been content to accept peace with dishonour. Goodly portions of the Lord's territory lay in the grasp of the Syrians and Joash was content to leave them there. How readily we follow the disastrous policy of compromise. Surrendering this or that to the clamour of the adversary in order to secure a truce. It is a fatal policy, for if once we begin to buy off the foe we have to be continually raising the price. But even where there is no compromising surrender how quickly through apathy or despair we are led to abandon the fight. *Vis inertiae* overcomes us, we cannot bear to be always watching and protesting. It is so much more comfortable to let things slide and go to sleep. Our Lord and Master, however, is continually bidding us declare war against sin.

What, with pipe and tabor
Fool away the light,
When He bids you labour,
When He tells you fight!

The genius of the Gospel is not peace at any price, but truth at all costs.

2. Union is strength. This is the meaning of the second act in this significant drama. "The prophet laid his hands upon the king's hands." Like the officer who sallied forth to capture one of the enemy's forts, after two unsuccessful attempts had been made, asking first of all from his general a grasp of his conquering right hand, so we must know what it is for our weakness to be encompassed in Christ's strength.

We can imagine the thrill that passed through the king as he felt the hands of the dying prophet resting upon his hands. We need the same Divinely wrought contact by the Holy Ghost, so that all our efforts are inspired and controlled by Jesus Christ. How much there is in the touch of a hand, whether it be the Bishop's fatherly hand laid in blessing upon the head of the young Christian who has just openly confirmed his vows of allegiance, or the symbolic joining of hands in the marriage service of those who are to be made man and wife. It means oneness of sympathy, identity of purpose and real living union. We shall never experience the full measure of victory which the Lord intends for us until it becomes a matter of real and daily experience that we abide in Christ and He in us.

3. Claim a complete deliverance. This is the meaning of the next step. The window was opened eastward and through the open window was shot forth the Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria.

To the east lay the land of Bashan and Gilead which the Syrians had wrested from Israel. The shooting of the arrow eastward was an act of defiance against Syria and a claiming of this usurped territory for God. How sadly we need to open the window

eastward. How much usurped territory lies before the Church of Christ to-day. We think of Palestine and Turkey and North Africa and all the regions where the Cross has given place to the Crescent, and the sterilizing faith of Islam so perverts the judgment, excites the passions and dominates the will of its devotees that they will not listen to the gospel message, and put to death any of their people who openly confess their faith in Jesus Christ. We think of the sad encroachments made upon the moral and religious life of the country by our national sins of gambling and drunkenness. We think, too, how many churches of our land are honeycombed with rationalism and infected with Romanism. And we think of the idols and heart sins that seek to occupy the place in our inner lives which belongs to God alone. As we shoot then the arrow of defiance and faith we mean no quarter to sin, no compromise with error. The whole world for Christ, and the whole man for God. The effective supremacy of Jesus Christ. All our thinking, all our reading, all our talking, all our planning, all our business and all our recreations under the absolute and real control of Jesus Christ.

Thus far the king obeyed. Loyalty compelled him. Something of the fire of the man of God had passed into his soul and he realized that he would be a recreant and craven traitor if he failed to make war against his country's foe. And as the arrow sped its flight the voice of the prophet proclaimed it "The Lord's arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Syria," and the significant words were added, "for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek till thou have consumed them."

4. Then came the fourth act with its momentous lesson, "Fulfil the obedience of faith," and the king failed at this point so that the man of God was

angry with him. He was bidden to take the arrows and smite upon the ground. He smote thrice and stayed. The king had doubtless taken up a quiver-full. One he had shot forth in defiance. Five or six remained in his hand. These he was not asked to shoot through the window, with the likelihood that some might be lost, but to smite down upon the ground as if his foe was already prostrate at his feet and he was completing the work of destruction. But instead of carrying through this mimic warfare until the quiver was empty "he smote thrice and stayed." So instead of smiting the Syrians until he had consumed them, he smote them only thrice. His victory over the Syrians in the open battlefield was in exact proportion to his "obedience of faith" in the prophet's chamber. How slow we are to learn this lesson. It is what we are in secret before God that fixes the amount of victory and blessing we enjoy in our walk and service amongst men. If only Joash had emptied the quiver he would have consumed the Syrians. If only we will be wholehearted before God, yielding our will wholly and trusting God's promises absolutely, we too shall be completely victorious against the world, the flesh and the devil. But half measures in secret before God result in cramped results and limited blessing in our campaign amongst men. Joshua yielded the full obedience of faith when he marched round Jericho thirteen times. The walls would never have fallen if he had marched round thrice and stopped. Whenever the full measure of victory is lacking in your outer conflict you may be sure that you have repeated Joash's foolish blunder and have failed to carry through the offering of your whole heart and soul to God in secret. Well might Elisha be angry, for it meant terrible loss of blessing for Israel. Nothing so grieves the great Captain of our Salvation

as half-heartedness in our private intercourse with God. The measure of open victory to be enjoyed during the day is fixed by the measure of thoroughness with which we seek God's face in secret. There is no fulness of blessing unless we fulfil the obedience of faith.

V

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY

D

Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty ; they shall behold a far stretching land. Thine heart shall muse on the terror : where is he that counted, where is he that weighed the tribute ? Thou shalt not see the fierce people, a people of a deep speech that thou canst not perceive ; of a strange tongue that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities : thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up. But there the Lord will be with us, in majesty.—ISA. xxxiii. 17-21.

The King in His Beauty

JERUSALEM was surrounded by the army of Sennacherib. The relief gained when Hezekiah paid over the three hundred talents of silver and the thirty talents of gold, emptying thereby the royal treasury and stripping the gold from the doors and pillars of the Temple, had not lasted long. Rabshakeh, the chief envoy of Assyria, had been sent with another army to demand the unconditional surrender of the city.

A great change, however, had taken place in the spirit and faith of the people. No further mention was made of an alliance with Egypt. The prophet Isaiah, instead of being ridiculed and despised, was at once appealed to by the king and his counsel followed. Hope and confidence in Jehovah had been restored, and this second attack of the treacherous Assyrian, instead of plunging the nation into despair seemed rather to rouse them to defiance.

It was God's forgiveness which had wrought the change. The departure of the Assyrian, at a time when Jerusalem was absolutely in his power, was a manifest proof of God's forgiving mercy and a striking confirmation of Isaiah's words. So, though the enemy returned, the prophet's encouraging and reassuring messages did not fall upon deaf ears. The chapter opens with a plain forecast of the speedy

destruction that should overtake the treacherous spoiler of God's people. Then follows a graphic picture of the disappointment of the ambassadors of peace and the deserted and downtrodden state of the country districts that had resulted from Sennacherib's breach of the covenant of peace. But from verse 10 to the end the sufficiency of the championship of Jehovah is unfolded, and the chapter closes with promises of victory and pardon, "the lame shall take the prey," "the people shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Yes, the presence and leadership of Jehovah would change everything. Of late they had seen Hezekiah in sackcloth and ashes lamenting before God the sin of Judah. Now, in the day of triumph over Assyria, the king would once more ride through the streets of the city arrayed in royal splendour. Of late Jerusalem had been encompassed by armies, shut in by a boastful foe. Now they should look out upon the land of far distances freed from the foot of the invader. The fierce nation should no more be seen. The scribe that penned the insulting letter; the official receiver that weighed out the gold and silver of the extortionate ransom; the engineer that had counted the towers of the city laying his plans for their overthrow; all these should disappear. But Jehovah should be with them in majesty. His presence would be to Jerusalem what the Tigris was to Nineveh, what Abana and Pharpar were to Damascus. The glorious Lord would be unto them a place of broad rivers and streams.

But as we read these Scriptures, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty," "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation" we feel that their primary application by no means exhausts their full meaning. A greater than Hezekiah is here. The King in His beauty is for us the very Prince

of Peace Himself. Once for our sakes He was covered with shame, mocked and buffeted and handcuffed. Now by faith we see Him crowned with glory and honour, and one day our eyes shall see Him as He is in His beauty.

As yet the new Jerusalem is hemmed in by foes. Enemies far more treacherous and destructive than the Assyrians are seeking to enslave and despoil the people of God. But our eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle so peaceful and steadfast that not one of the stakes thereof shall be removed nor any of its cords broken.

Yes, the story of the Siege of Jerusalem is only a parable of the life of God in the soul of man. "God's forgiveness is much more than a clean slate." It brings His people into the joy and strength of a living union with Himself. It gave new national life to Judah. It gives new spiritual life to the pardoned sinner. Once the Divine forgiveness is realized the whole man is born again. But this does not make us free from temptation. The Assyrians will surely return and menace the city. But the Lord is our sure defence.

So we detach from this chapter as a motto text the words, "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty." It is a personal motto, "Thine eyes shall see"; and it implies the illumination of the Holy Spirit, for it is only when the eyes of our hearts are opened and the light of the Spirit shines upon the Lord Jesus that we can see Him in His beauty. It shall teach us two great lessons.

1. The Beauty of the King passes all man's understanding. There is the beauty of His personal character. It is unfolded to us in the Gospel story. There we see His goodness and truth. His purity is so strong and incandescent with the fire of love that it cannot be marred by the defilements of earth. His

sympathy and compassion are so tender and real that the most needy and outcast are attracted to Him. Have you seen the King of men in the beauty of His absolute sinlessness and all victorious love, or are you like some of those who met Him in the flesh and stumbled over His lowly parentage, His obscure position, His ignominious death? To some, alas! He is as a root out of a dry ground. He hath no form or comeliness, and when they see Him there is no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. Yes, Christ has no beauty in the eyes of the carnal and worldly. He pours contempt on the wisdom of the flesh, the wisdom of this world. What think ye of Christ? Have ye eyes to see the beauty in Jesus. Are you drawn to the House of God, Sunday after Sunday, with the cry upon your heart, "Sirs, we would see Jesus"?

There is the beauty, too, of His perfect sacrifice. This was set forth in the old Testament Scriptures in the passover lamb, in the brazen serpent, and in all the sacrifices connected with the old covenant. The Lamb without spot or blemish was slain that His atoning blood might cover our sins. The beauty and perfection of the personal character secures the beauty and perfection of the precious sacrifice. So the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is the centre of the worship of Heaven. Have you seen the beauty of the Lamb of Calvary? Is that blood-stained Cross the most beautiful sight in the world to you? Have you seen the love of God triumphing there over the sin of man, and the Son of God reconciling God and man by the sacrifice of Himself, and laying a righteous foundation for the exercise towards guilty sinners of God's sovereign mercy and grace? Is the blood of that Sacrifice precious to you? Do you love to draw near in obedience to Christ's command to eat the bread and

drink the cup in remembrance of that finished work ? The King in His beauty is revealed to the believing heart in those broken symbols. For He could be no King of Beauty for us sinners had He not made a perfect covering for our hideous sins.

But, again, there is the beauty of His perpetual intercession and His abiding presence in our hearts. Christ is no longer on the Cross—He is on the Throne, seated at the right hand of God. From that vantage ground of infinite power and resource He watches all that transpires here below. And He not only watches from a distance, He is with us to save and succour and defend. He is able to save to the uttermost, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us. There is no intermission in His prevailing presence for us before the throne, there need be no failure, no breakdown in His effectual salvation of us in daily life. Just as the noble Thames flows through our great Metropolis bringing us the fresh breezes from the Channel and helping more than we can measure to maintain the health and vigour of the inhabitants of the city, so the Lord Himself is as a river of water of life in the midst of His believing people. His presence is our salvation. He is ever cleansing and defending His Church. In the wilderness of perplexity His presence gives us rest. In the furnace of affliction one like the Son of God is with us to loose our bonds. Do you know the secret of the Lord's presence ? Is the comfort of the Holy Ghost a reality to you ? Have you seen the King in His beauty as He walks with us along life's highway ? Or are your eyes still holden ?

2. To see the King in His beauty is the essence of all true religion. The world cannot understand the things of God. It cannot receive the Comforter because it seeth Him not. The veil of sense shuts out the glories of the unseen world. But it

is not so with the believers. "This," said Jesus, "is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting Life." Have you seen the Son and believed on Him? Or is there still some veil of prejudice or disobedience upon your heart?

Is personal religion still a mystery to you? Does conversion seem to you a strange and doubtful experience? Does the earnestness of some Christians seem altogether extravagant and fanatical. Do some of our hymns speak of the Lord Jesus in language which seems to you exaggerated and unreal? It is because your eyes are holden. When you have truly seen the King you will find it impossible to exaggerate His beauty, and you will find it equally impossible to set a limit to your obedience. The King must have all. Loyalty cannot measure out its service. It delights in sacrifice. Indeed self is lost sight of as we see Him. We say at once with the Baptist, "He must increase, I must decrease." You never know what true religion is until you have seen the King. As the veil of sense is penetrated by the vision of faith the victory of life begins.

This is the object of all the means of grace. They are to help us to see the King. Be it hymn or sermon, be it prayer or sacrament, be it providence or duty, anything which helps you to see the King helps you to become a royal soul and to lead a pure and noble life. There is an end to all sloth then. You cannot stand idling in the market-place, you cannot give way to lethargy and indifference when you have seen the King. All life becomes worth living then when the humblest duty performed aright may be rewarded with a sight of Him whom you love. And there is an end to all pride then. Seeing Him you will abhor yourself. You will offer continually that one sacrifice which God

will never despise, the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart.

This gives new zest to worship. For this we pray and study our Bibles, for this we come to Church and join in the Lord's supper, that we may see the King. This helps us to live a detached and separate life. We are afraid of anything, however lawful and innocent, which might so engross us as to come between us and the King. For the King in His beauty is the object of all our desire, the source of all our comfort and strength. The King in His beauty will one day be the end of all this world's woes, the beginning of an endless reign of righteousness and peace.

It is not so long since the eyes of the whole civilized world were turned towards the great pageant in Westminster Abbey, when it was the pride and joy of the nobles of England to behold their sovereign in all his royal splendour, to greet him with loud acclamations and to renew to him their personal homage and allegiance. Let these words then concerning the King in His beauty be continually upon your heart. Examine yourselves by them. Search your lives by them. Let them guide and inspire your private prayers, your public worship, your whole life and conversation. The joy of Heaven will be to be like him and to see Him as He is: that joy, that transformation shall be ours on earth in proportion as we realize the fulfilment now of the sure promise: "Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty."

VI

VISIONS OF GOD

28 |

Your young men shall see visions.—JOEL ii. 8.
Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he
may run that readeth it.—HAB. ii. 2.
Though it tarry, wait for it.—HAB. ii. 3.
Mine eyes have seen the King.—ISAIAH vi. 5.

Visions of God

THIS is one of the first results of the Pentecostal baptism. The young men, the hard-headed and practical members of the community who look at everything from a common sense and business standpoint, "shall see visions." It will not make them visionary. Far from it. It will make them like Joseph and Elisha and Daniel. They will find in their vision of God the secret of purity and strength and fidelity.

But where shall we see visions? Not by gazing into the heavens but by reading our Bibles. So the Prophet Habakkuk says "Write the vision and make it plain upon tables." This is the great purpose of the Bible. Every page is a window into Heaven. You never read it aright unless you gain through it a vision of God. The daily paper opens a window into the world around us and we see the craft and cunning, the violence and deceit, the strifes and jealousies of men. But the Bible opens a window into Heaven and reveals to us the love and goodness and power of God.

Have you seen the vision? It is plain, so plain that he who reads may run. Not as we sometimes hear, that he who runs may read. Nay, you must not run past it. That is the sin of this hurrying pleasure-loving age. Men will not give themselves

time to take in the vision of life. But he who reads will have to run. There will be no loitering then. The vision will fire your soul with such divine enthusiasm that you will run off to make known what you have seen. Like the four lepers at the gate of Samaria, once you have discovered the deliverance God has accomplished and the glorious release from siege and famine which His grace has brought about, you will be forced to make it known. Have you seen the vision? The prophet adds "though it tarry, wait for it." Yes, indeed, for you are of no use in the world until you have seen it. It is the men who have seen God that are a blessing to others.

Esau lacked this vision and it led him to sell his birthright. The birthright meant spiritual blessing. That is why Esau is called a profane man. The bargain he struck was not only a foolish one, it was a profane one. He sold his birthright because he despised it. He did not know its value. If Jacob had asked him for his favourite horse or dog the result would have been very different. He set no value upon his birthright. That was a spiritual boon and it seemed to him altogether unreal. Spiritual things always seem unreal to the man who has had no vision of God. When the carnal nature presses, the bread which perisheth seems of paramount importance and spiritual privileges seem altogether shadowy and unreal. But when you have seen God and the opened Heaven, your birthright, i.e. your right through the atoning sacrifice to become a son of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, outweighs all the pleasures of sin, and it becomes easy for you to keep first things first.

It was this which made Joseph so steadfast. In his youth God gave him dreams; they were not the result of indigestion but visions of the night. His father had already given him as a special token

of his love a "coat of many colours." It was not surely a mere piece of favouritism. The coat was the outward sign of that supremacy which the dreams indicated and which probably had already been made known to Jacob. Jacob knew the misery that had resulted in the home of his childhood, where the judgment of God choosing the younger before the elder had not been accepted by Isaac his father, and mother and son stooped to falsehood and trickery in order to bring about the counsels of God. So Jacob determined that in his household God's purpose should be known and accepted from the first and he gave to Joseph this robe of honour. The expression "coat of many colours" means literally "a tunic of extremities," a stately garment reaching down to the ankles and wrists. The same word is used in 2 Samuel xiii. 18, when this explanation is added "for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled." The garment stood then for two things, for royalty and purity. Joseph had his visions because he was a kingly soul, and of a pure heart. And the effect of these visions is seen all through his future life. "The Lord was with Joseph and he was a lucky fellow" to quote Wycliff's version. This was written of him before what we would call his good fortune had begun. When still a slave in Potiphar's house, exposed to the repeated solicitations of his master's wife, soon to be falsely accused and thrown into prison and forgotten by the man he had befriended, with all this before him "he was a lucky fellow" because God was with him. That is the necessary result of the vision of God. It dwarfs everything else. It reduces to their true proportions the circumstances of daily life. God never changes. God is working His purpose out. The man who trusts in God will never be confounded. The pit, the

Tindale

slave market, the prison cell may lie before us, but these are only for a time. In the long run God's blessing prevails even in this topsy turvy world, "and the blessing of the Lord it maketh rich and He addeth no sorrow with it."

But the first result of the vision of God is an overwhelming sense of sin. It was so with the Apostle John in Patmos when he had a vision of the glory and majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ. "When I saw him," he writes, "I fell at His feet as dead." It was the same Lord on whose bosom he had reclined at the last supper. But when he beheld His spotless purity and heavenly splendour he could think of nothing but his own vileness and guilt. This is the distinguishing characteristic of the men who have seen God. There is about them a depth, a solemnity, a reverence, a brokenness of soul. Those who are only exercised with the outward letter, the theological dogma, often remain shallow and self-sufficient, and pose as judges and critics of divine things. Those who have seen God tremble at His word. Curiosity gives place to reverence.

There is room for curiosity. It was curiosity that led Moses to say "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." Alas, for those sensebound souls that pass by the burning bushes and never see the evidences of God's presence and power amongst men. They read the gospels with their fourfold portrait of Jesus Christ and are not arrested by that unique life, supreme in sinlessness and suffering. They hear of missions to the heathen and learn of the triumphs of God's word in Uganda and Fuhkien, but never enquire what is the secret of the power that thus changes the lives and characters of men. They see in their own homes or amongst their friends, men and women of no exalted position, whose common lives are made beautiful

and sublime by the indwelling presence of God, the bramblebush is all ablaze with the fire of God, but they pay no attention to it.

But to Moses the command came, "Draw not nigh hither, put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Curiosity had to give place to reverence.

Yes, carnal curiosity is fatal to any vision of God. Uzziah pressed in to offer incense within the veil, and he was smitten with leprosy. "It was in the year that King Uzziah died" that Isaiah saw the Lord. The vision of faith begins when carnal curiosity and the wisdom of the flesh are set aside. "Except a man be born again he cannot *see* the kingdom of God." The things of God are hidden from the wise and prudent and are revealed unto babes. We soon reach the limits of human knowledge. We are soon forced to exclaim like Nicodemus, "How can these things be?" And the "how" is not generally revealed to us. But though the truth passes our understanding, Christ expects us to believe it on the authority of His testimony. Christ never endorsed the popular notion that a man cannot be expected to believe what he cannot understand. This is the sphere of faith, it deals with those things which pass man's understanding. They are not confined to religion. The transformation that takes place each spring in every village orchard passes man's understanding. Reason is forced to say, "How can these things be?" How can the trees which one month are brown and bare deck themselves with fresh foliage and fair blossoms soon to give place to precious fruit? But experience knows that so it is. And when we ask concerning the life of God in the soul of man "how can these things be?" how can the guilty be pardoned, how can the vile be cleansed, how can a man be born of

the Spirit? the Saviour confronts us with His own perfect knowledge and absolute authority: "We speak that we do know, and bear witness to that we have seen," and instead of excusing our unbelief He rebukes us for not receiving His witness. The witness of Jesus Christ is the warrant of faith. Faith does not rest upon reason but upon revelation. Given sufficient warrant, there is no violence done to reason in the exercise of faith. It does not injure the reasoning faculties of children to ask them to believe things which their parents know to be true but are not able to explain.

And faith thus exercised receives definite and unmistakable confirmation. When born again we do see the kingdom of God. The manifestation of God to the soul which follows upon simple faith in Christ's testimony is a plain evidence that our faith has not been in vain. Christ's words are verified continually: "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see?" There is a new birth for them who believe in Jesus. There is a vision of God for those who are born of the Spirit. No less definite and remarkable than the change which took place in the poisoned Israelite when he beheld the serpent of brass, is the change which takes place in the conscience and heart of the sinner when he trusts in the crucified Saviour.

But if we want the full witness we must exercise full faith. Men think that faith will be easier if its region is more restricted. They try to reduce Christian dogma to a minimum and say, just believe in God as a beneficent father and you need not seek to believe in the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Atonement. But it is a mistaken policy. It is easier to believe the whole creed than half a one. The more you curtail your faith the more you lessen the force of the Divine confirmation.

Believe all that Christ has revealed and you will enjoy all that Christ has promised. "At that day," Jesus said, "ye shall *know* that I am in My Father and ye in Me and I in you." Full knowledge, the unimpeded vision of God, commences on our day of Pentecost; it begins when we are filled with the Holy Ghost.

Yes, it is the men who believe, the men who have seen the kingdom of God, that are able to convince others. Where are the missions of the Unitarians? Where do we find the devoted and self-sacrificing apostles of a reasonable faith, that is a faith established by reason as distinguished from a faith resting upon reasonable evidence of a Divine revelation?

Have done then with all carnal curiosity and all wisdom of the flesh. "The pure in heart shall see God."

Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee.

Yes, though the immediate effect is an overwhelming sense of sin you will not be left crushed and overcome. Isaiah received the sacrament of cleansing, the live coal from the altar. To John came the reassuring touch and the strengthening word, "Fear not, I am He." Christ knows how to bring His servants over from the despair that comes from the knowledge of self into the rest of faith that comes from the knowledge of God. There is no remedy for our sinfulness in ourselves. Isaiah was not told that his language was exaggerated, that all his services as a prophet gave him a right to stand in the presence of God. John was not reminded of the old familiar intercourse or told that he who had leant his head upon Christ's breast need never think himself unfit for His presence. No, the transformation is wrought not by the dis-

covery of any saving merit or qualification in ourselves, but by a clearer revelation of Jesus Christ. A new view of Jesus, a fresh vision of God, is the secret of all blessing. This made Jacob the supplanter a "prince with God," this gave Joshua the victory over Jericho and the king thereof and the mighty men of valour; this enabled Elisha to go in and out throughout Israel as a holy man of God, never fainthearted, never discouraged, never at a loss, able even when shut in by the Syrians on every side to use the reckoning of faith and reply to his terrified servant, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they be with them."

Yes, patience, courage, cheerfulness, strength, all belong to the men who see God. Claim the promise and rest not until it has been fulfilled in your own experience. "Your young men shall see visions."

PART II
Manifested in the Gospels

I
TURNING WATER INTO WINE

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called and His disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine the mother of Jesus said unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus said unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother said unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And He saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was (but the servants which drew the water knew), the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him.—ST. JOHN ii. 1-11

Turning Water into Wine

NONE, I suppose, but the disciples and the servants knew the miracle that had taken place. For very shame the failure of the wine was not advertised, and so the guests were not aware how deeply they were indebted to the new prophet that was amongst them. They wondered that such excellent wine had not been produced before, but they knew not whence it came. The disciples knew however. To them was manifested the Saviour's glory, the glory of perfect human sympathy joined to Divine creative power, and with fresh confidence and joy they believed in Him.

This was the beginning of the signs which Jesus did. It is a sample of all that followed. And its like is to be seen as much to-day now that Jesus is exalted at the right hand of God as when He was present upon earth. Now, as then, Jesus manifests forth His glory by turning our water into wine. But now as then the miracle is wrought behind the scenes. There is no ostentation, no public display, no attempt to coerce faith by means of sight. Even now the world does not know whence its best wine comes, but the Lord's own disciples they know and believe.

This scene at the wedding-feast is just a parable of daily life wherever Jesus Christ is trusted and obeyed. The wine failed. We know not why. It

was due probably to some accident. Perhaps it arose through some unexpected increase in the number of guests, or through some breakdown or highway robbery interfering with the supply. But ~~accident or no accident~~, the wine of earth is continually failing. Sickness, bereavement, poverty, the chilling shadow of war, these are the accidents that often take the wine away from life's feast. And even when life seems to run an even course the wine often fails. Not as a rule at the beginning of the feast. Childhood, especially in these days of gentler discipline and more perfect sympathy between parents and children, is, thank God, a bright and joyous time. Youth, too, is generally full of enthusiasm and hope. But as middle age comes on then as a rule the wine fails. Ideals are lowered, ambitions are surrendered, enthusiasm wanes, work becomes monotonous and mechanical, and daily life grows a little flat and insipid. Then it is that Satan comes with his allurements and tempts men to taste the forbidden pleasures of sin. Many then are drawn aside into gambling and drinking and all excitements of the world just because they can no longer draw any strong enthusiasm from home and duty.

It was at a wedding the wine failed. There is no purer earthly source of joy than wedded love. Yet even this may fail. And when the love dies away the union that was once perfect liberty may seem utter bondage. Oh that in every disunited home there might be revealed the presence of Christ, who is ever standing behind the scenes waiting to change our water into wine, waiting, from His own unfailing source of Divine love, to keep our human love fresh and strong and tender and true.

Yes, the wine of earth fails. The testimony of

the ruler of the feast is a true record of daily life. "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine, and afterward that which is worse." The man who knows not God has had the best of his life before he is forty. But it is not so with the Christian. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The presence of Christ makes the difference. God's children do sometimes find obedience difficult and life dreary and flat. There are some who drag on from a sense of duty, but without joy or enthusiasm in their service. But it is because they do not recognize the One who stands amongst them waiting to baptize with the Holy Ghost.

This is the essential difference between the joy of the worldling and the joy of the Christian. The worldling's joy depends upon forgetting the deepest facts of life, the Christian's joy comes from remembering them. The worldling dare not examine the shrinking store of earthly happiness, he dreads getting old, he is only happy while he forgets. The Christian, secure in the love of Him who said, "I have made and I will bear. Even to hoar hairs will I carry you," can look forward to the worst that can happen with undisturbed peace and joy. All gloomy forebodings vanish when we remember Jesus Christ. We never tire of the wine He gives. His supply never fails, and our relish for it never abates. Such is the miracle of grace that each new duty brings its own reward, and all the varying vicissitudes of life become fresh occasions for "finding out the greatness" of God's loving heart. Christ keeps us well supplied with that hope and enthusiasm which are the wine of life. Be sure that Christ is invited to your feast and your water shall be turned into wine.

Yes, behind the scenes of common life this secret

miracle is continually being performed by the living Christ. Do not say that the age of miracles is past. God may not often see fit to suspend the laws of nature or hasten their working, but He still answers prayer. God is still a living God, and unless this age of unbelief has destroyed your faith you will find solid comfort, efficient help, and supernatural strength and joy in communion with Him.

But notice the occasion of the miracle. It was altogether secular and domestic. It shows that Jesus Christ has sympathy with housekeepers, and does not want to diminish the innocent pleasures of life.

This must have greatly impressed the disciples. They had all been stirred by the faithful fearless Voice that had been crying in the wilderness of Judea. Many of them had been professed disciples of the Baptist. They had heard him pronounce in memorable words the immeasurable superiority of the Christ. "I, indeed, baptize you with water unto repentance." "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." They wondered, perhaps, how the Messiah would prove greater than John, and what was this more spiritual baptism that He would impart. Would He exercise greater austerities than the Baptist and more rigidly shut Himself out from social life? And on the third day they find Him seated by His mother's side at a simple village wedding, and marvel as with perfect delicacy of feeling, without the least show or ostentation, He puts forth His creative power to supply a serious lack in the feast, thus averting the discomfiture of His host, and a premature breaking up of the wedding banquet. Yes, Jesus manifested His glory (not the Father's glory, mark you, but His own) by sympathizing with the innocent pleasures and satisfying the common secular needs of those around

Him. No wonder they believed on Him. Surely none who really know Him can ever refuse to trust Him. Let those who have held back, fearing that entire consecration might cramp their life and make it hard and joyless, ask themselves, "Cannot I trust Him whose first miracle was wrought to relieve the embarrassment of His host and keep the wedding festivities from breaking down?" Be assured, then, that no occasion is too trivial or too secular for the sympathy and succour of Jesus Christ. He will not deprive you of anything that could minister to your real welfare. The path of obedience is always the path of sunshine.

But notice the manner of the miracle. It required the co-operation of the servants and a signal exercise of the obedience of faith. The water-pots had to be filled with water, and on an occasion when to offer water to guests instead of wine would seem a serious insult and a bad omen, these servants had to pour out what they believed to be water, as if it were wine. We are not told when the change was wrought, at what precise moment "the unconscious water saw its God and blushed." Probably not all the water in the water-pots became wine, but only that which in the obedience of faith the servants poured out into the glasses of the guests. The practical lesson, however, is obvious; it is this: "Fill the water-pots to brim, leave the miracle to Him." He will not fail in His part if we do ours. The water will be turned into wine, prayer will become communion; faith will become vision; duty will become delight, and even pain a sacrament of blessing. But we must fill the waterpots to brim. We must give to God full measure.

This is where we fail. Our prayers are hurried and curtailed, though we ought to make it our chief business in life to seek God's face, and to patiently tarry

for the Heavenly Vision. We rush into the Presence Chamber and never wait for the stretching out of the golden sceptre and the distribution of the Royal bounty. It is still true, "ye shall both seek Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your hearts." When the finding begins, the water becomes wine, but if the searching is not with the whole heart, i.e. if the water-pots are only half filled, He cannot manifest His glory—the secret miracle cannot take place.

One of the sad signs of the times is the decay in some quarters of all expectation of manifest and conscious blessing. Christian men seem to think that it is the right thing to quench all natural desire for a manifestation of the Divine glory, and to be content with a dreary routine of service from which the wine of Heaven is altogether lacking. Our fathers used to go to Church to "get a blessing," to "get good" to their souls, and if they got no good they felt sure there was something wrong either with themselves or with the sermon. For the sermon is still the most important part of public worship since God is still pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Now we are told that it is a selfish view to think of getting a blessing, that we go to Church to give, not to get, to render praise and adoration to God, not to receive comfort and strength for ourselves. Alas, alas! the Church is so unaccustomed to the secret miracle and has so often had to be content with a flat joyless experience that Christians have begun to try and persuade themselves that "the joy of the Lord" is an unwarranted luxury, and that they prove the unselfishness of their religion by being quite content to seek and not find.

But what are you going to give to the Lord, if your heart is not enriched with a manifestation of His

glory. Will He care for mere words of praise and devotion? How did the psalmist settle this question? "What shall I render unto the Lord," he asked, "for all the benefits that He hath done unto me?" And his answer was, "I will take the cup of salvation." You can only give by taking. If you want to render Him adoration and praise you must first receive a fresh manifestation of His glory. He wants from you not water but wine, not insipid and lifeless orthodoxy and formalism, but a heart that rejoices because it trusts, that overflows because it has been opened wide to receive. The Holy Ghost is rightly named the Comforter. We are to walk in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. And as soon as the comfort of the Holy Ghost ceases in our hearts our worship becomes miserably flat and utterly worthless in God's sight.

So with the daily round, the common task. Here, too, we must fill the water-pots to brim. There must be no discounting of duty. In our social intercourse, in our correspondence, in our dealings with employers and employed, with tradespeople and customers, with servants and children in all the full circumference of our outer life, we must take all possible pains and yield a full measure of patient obedience. But here, too, the secret miracle will take place. The drudgery will disappear, the miserable feeling that our lives are of no importance will be effectually banished, for all will be done unto the Lord, and the constraining love of Christ will prove to be the long sought philosophers' stone that turns everything it touches into gold.

And if strange inexplicable disaster overtake us, if all our circumstances are adverse and, like John the Baptist, abandoned to his fate in the Castle of Machaerus, we wonder, for a moment, if God has forgotten us, then, too, our water shall be turned

into wine, for by resolute faith we shall win that most precious of all beatitudes, "Blessed is he who-soever shall not be offended in Me."

Surely Christ came to bring real joy and strength to men. Moses' first miracle was the turning of water into blood, for the law was a ministration of condemnation. Christ's first miracle was the turning water into wine, because the Gospel is a ministration of life and power. He came that we might have "life more abundantly," real life, conscious life, overflowing life. And whenever the world gets a taste of this life it has to acknowledge that there is nothing like it. The ruler of the feast did not know whence the good wine came, but he recognized that it was better than all that had preceded it. This is still one of the simplest and most convincing of Christian evidences. The peace of God does pass all understanding. There is a joy which the world cannot take away. Christian martyrs in all ages have gone to the stake singing and rejoicing like a bride going to her nuptials. Whenever trouble comes over the land as when the coronation festivities were broken off because the King of England was laid low, then men bethink them of Heaven and betake themselves to prayer. Christianity will never lose its hold upon men if only the Lord's people will so fulfil their round of duty and service that the Saviour may be able to manifest forth His glory and turn their water into wine.

II

FILLING THE EMPTY NETS

Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night and took nothing : nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes ; and their nets were breaking. And they beckoned unto their partners, in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But Simon Peter, when he saw it, fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. . . . And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not ; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all and followed Him.—LUKE v. 4-11

Filling the Empty Nets

OUR Lord's miracles were generally marked by a beautiful combination of philanthropy and piety. He was continually doing good to men's bodies, but He never lost an opportunity of impressing upon them the deeper, more important, and more lasting needs of their souls. So on this occasion. Simon Peter was certainly well rewarded for the loan of his fishing boat, and at the same time he learned such a lesson in the exercise of faith, and passed through such a deep spiritual experience, that his whole life was changed by it. It was, indeed, a turning-point in his life, a critical moment fraught with far-reaching consequences such as he never dreamed of at the time, when Peter obeyed this word of the Master, "Launch out into the deep."

It came as a message to a tried and dispirited worker. Peter and his companions were busy washing their nets. But no fish were strewn upon the beach as the fruit of their labour. They had toiled all the night and had taken nothing. Are you a tired and discouraged one? You look back upon your past life. You have not been idle. You have laboured assiduously. You cannot perhaps say you have taken nothing, but you are tempted to ask, What is the good of it all? What lasting good have I

done to others, what real satisfaction have I gained for myself? And if your work has been without the Master's presence and oversight, if you have toiled not for God and Eternity but for self and the life that now is, then you have taken nothing. You have spent your money for that which is not bread, your labour for that which satisfieth not. To you then the Master comes as He came to Simon Peter, not to upbraid you, but to show you the better way, to bid you "Launch out into the deep."

The command came after a sermon preached from Peter's fishing boat. At first Peter was not in the mood for listening to preaching and occupied himself chiefly with the nets. Soon, however, he was spellbound and completely drawn out of himself by the sympathy and power of the Preacher. He watched the faces of the crowd that thronged the beach and saw how eagerly they drank in the wonderful words of life. He felt that he was in the presence of a Master Fisherman well skilled in the art of catching men. Yea, he felt that he himself was being caught in the Saviour's net that morning, and was glad to have it so, glad to feel himself held in the entangling meshes of such guileless earnestness and disinterested love. Some mission sermons are followed by an after-meeting in order to help people to come to a decision and act upon what they have heard. This command, "Launch out into the deep," was the after-meeting instruction. It was a test, a simple but crucial test of Peter's obedience.

It meant a new step in the life of faith. Peter in obeying showed that he set more value upon the word of Christ than upon his own judgment and experience. The nets were now cleaned. The best time for fishing was over. There were no signs of a shoal anywhere. If Peter had walked by sight, if he had followed his own judgment, he would have

refused to start fishing again ; it seemed like dirtying the nets for nothing. And Peter was accustomed to the Lake, a specialist in the art of catching fish, while Jesus Christ was a carpenter by trade. But so complete was the mastery that Jesus Christ had gained, that even in this matter, where humanly speaking Peter could claim special knowledge, Peter set aside his own judgment and chose rather to obey the word of Christ. It was a venture of faith, and the obedience of faith is full of such ventures. If Christ had said to Peter, "Look, do you see those marks on the water and those birds hovering round and flying low ? there's a shoal of fish there, put out and catch them," there would have been no demand upon Peter's faith. Peter showed his faith in Christ by obeying without seeing or understanding the reason why. "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing," it seems madness to start again now with nothing to encourage us, but Thou hast bidden it, and that is enough for me, "at Thy word I will let down the nets." The life of faith is not governed by sight but by the word of the living Christ.

And that word to us is often just this very command, "Launch out into the deep." It is in the deep of mid-ocean that we realize the greatness of God and our need of His protection. Those who keep in the shallows think they can do without God. They take a shallow view of life and the needs of mankind. They think that poverty and suffering are quickly vanishing before the ministrations of hospitals and charity organization societies. They consider that sin and crime will soon be overcome by better education and more stringent police control. They regard burdened consciences and broken hearts as foolish fancies, inherited prejudices belonging to the old days of superstition, which can have no place

in well regulated minds enlightened by a careful study of the laws which govern human life. This is, indeed, a shallow view of life which ministers to gross selfishness and results in a degrading materialism. Christ bids us launch out into the deep. Do not try and confine your thinking and planning within the limits of this material world. You have a soul, find it and develop it. You have a conscience, listen to it and obey it. You have a heart, do not crush its longings, but come to Christ who alone can satisfy them. Cut the cable that binds you to the shore, whatever it may be. Is it intellectual indolence or moral cowardice? Is it dread of failure, fear of fanaticism and the scorn of the ungodly, or self-indulgence and love of ease? Leave the shallows at all costs. Seek a deep knowledge of God's Word and a deep experience of His salvation. In spite of past failure and the unpromising aspect of your present position, Launch out; attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.

Three things followed when Simon Peter launched out into the deep, and we may expect the same if we ~~really~~ follow his example. There was a fresh revelation of Jesus Christ, a fresh quickening of conscience, and a fresh consecration of his whole life.

1. He made a great discovery that morning. Though he had accepted his brother Andrew's testimony that Jesus was the Messiah, the wondrous power of the personality of Jesus Christ had not fully laid hold upon him. We learn truths and know them in our heads long before we experience the full power of them in our hearts. But that morning the sympathy and power of Jesus Christ laid hold upon Peter's heart. "To think," he would say to himself as he watched the nets

breaking beneath the burden of the many fish, "to think that the Master, while pouring out His heart in such wonderful teaching to the multitude, should have noticed poor Peter's empty nets and have arranged this beautiful supply." Yea, what a prophet is this, seeing into the hidden depths of the sea and discovering this shoal that none of us fishermen saw a trace of. Jesus Christ had met Simon Peter on the plane of his secular life, sympathizing with him over his empty nets and putting forth His divine knowledge and power to fill them. Has Jesus Christ ever filled your empty nets? He knows all the empty parts in your life. Launch out first and He will surely fill them. It is worth while having the nets empty that you may discover how readily Christ will fill them. Once you have tasted the exquisite sweetness of having your empty nets filled by Jesus you will never look elsewhere.

But with this discovery there came a fresh quickening of conscience. He felt that the very same penetrating gaze which detected the shoal of fish was reading the deepest secrets of his heart. As a well taught Jew, Peter had always acknowledged himself a sinner, but now he felt the exceeding sinfulness of his sin as he realized how unnecessary and how vile it seemed in the eyes of Jesus Christ. His conscience had been sleeping. It was startled into fresh life and activity by this discovery of the sympathy and power of Jesus Christ.

This is always the result of launching out into the deep. A shallow view of life means a sleeping conscience and a shallow sense of sin. Christ's full sympathy and power are only manifested in the deep. So some souls are only brought to Christ through trouble. They live superficial lives, quite content with the pleasures of the world, not abandoned to evil, but feeling no need of a Saviour. At

last by stress of wind and tempest they are driven into the deep. All at once their earthly hopes seem blighted. The friend they trusted has played them false. The money they made a god of has melted away. The glow of vigorous health has given place to the trembling of weakness and disease. God is thrusting them out into the deep that He may make known to them His goodness and power. And when His presence is thus manifested their sleeping consciences awake.

So Peter fell at Jesus' knees when he saw the overflowing shoal of fish, and cried, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Not that he wished the Lord to leave him. The words were ill chosen, but they were the first that sprang to his lips to express the feeling that filled his heart, his sense of the infinite moral gulf that was fixed between himself and Jesus Christ. This is the real deep into which Christ longs to bring you, a deep overwhelming sense of your own sinfulness. Do not wait till trouble drives you into it, but launch out of your own accord and with a clearer view of the glory of Jesus you will have a deeper sense of your own sinfulness in His sight.

But this will not drive you from Jesus. Nay, you will feel constrained to abide in His presence Who alone knows the depth of your disgrace and loves you in spite of it. It will lead to a fresh consecration of life. Peter felt that only one occupation remained open to him. The most successful fishing in the Sea of Galilee seemed poor sport and mean occupation for one who had thus seen into the depths of the knowledge of Christ and of his own soul. He was ready enough now to accept the Master's commission, and when they had brought their boat to land they forsook all and followed Jesus. His launching out upon the Sea of Galilee

led to a launching out into a new and blessed life of service and ministry as the chosen companion and apostle of Jesus Christ.

So your whole future will be changed if you will launch out into the deep at the word of Christ. I cannot tell what form this launching out may take in your life. Peter had heaved anchor and set the sails and steered out into the deep hundreds of times before, this time he did it at the word of Christ and in definite expectation of a full supply. It may be an old duty done in a new spirit, or it may be a wholly new departure, the renunciation of some sin or hindrance, the dissolving of an unholy fellowship with worldly and ungodly friends, the confessing Christ with the mouth in circles where you have long been silent. Whatever the next step Christ asks from you in the obedience of faith, take it without delay. Jesus Christ will so discover to you His infinite ability to fill your empty nets that you will gladly henceforth forsake all to follow Him.

III

HONOURING A MOTHER'S FAITH

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David ; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying; Send her away ; for she crieth after us. But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord : yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.—
MATT. XV. 21-28.

Honouring a Mother's Faith

I WONDER which surprised her most. The praising her faith or the granting her request. At the first moment she could only think of the boon bestowed. "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." "The devil is gone out of thy daughter." But when she had reached home and had seen that the thing was done and, revelling in the newly restored companionship with her daughter, told over and over again the story of how she had asked and received, this other word of the Saviour would come back to her and fill her with surprise. "Child," I can hear her say, "He said unto me 'O woman, great is thy faith,' and I noticed that the disciples seemed almost envious of me as they heard Him say it. Yet what did your poor mother do? How could I fail to ask when my need was so great, or how could I go away until my prayer was answered? I really do not see that I had any great faith." So is it always. Great faith is never great in its own eyes. Just as one is not conscious of one's breathing until something goes wrong or some heavy strain makes one labour for breath, so it is only when faith is weak and defective that one is conscious of it. When faith is perfect we trust without thinking about it. No true Christian is conscious of exercising great faith, but many know that they have a

great Saviour to trust in. High views of Christ and low views of self always go together. This woman and the centurion are the only two whose faith the Saviour commended. Both were conspicuous for their humility. Great faith then is always joined to great humility.

But great faith can flourish under great disadvantages. This woman was a Syrophenician living in a heathen land. She was shut out from the many privileges belonging to the chosen nation. A descendant of the old Canaanites upon whom God's curse had fallen, some knowledge of the true God, Who in the past had done such wonders in Israel, had filtered through and awakened living faith in her soul. All such living faith is God's gift, the work of the Holy Spirit. There is such a thing as hereditary faith. It is part of the children's bread that when too young to doubt they should be taught to believe in God and to pray to Him, learning from the Bible stories all that He hath done for His servants in olden times. But such hereditary faith, though a sufficient warrant for receiving Holy Baptism, is not saving faith and gives no adequate strength for the battle against sin. It needs to be quickened by the Holy Ghost. It must be sealed by personal contact with the Saviour. Each one individually must learn to see the print of the nails in the Saviour's hands and feet, and cry, "My Lord and my God," "He loved me and gave Himself for me." This is why infant baptism is followed by confirmation, and this is why all who value true religion press for personal conversion and some evidence of a "true penitent heart and lively faith" before the laying on of hands in confirmation. Only a lively faith can be sealed by the Holy Ghost. A dead faith must be quickened before it can be confirmed. This woman had no hereditary faith. She

was brought out of heathen darkness into the clear light of a personal knowledge of God. She will arise in the judgment against any who in spite of a Christian home and Christian baptism and Christian training have no living and working faith.

Her great faith was nursed in the school of sorrow, and stirred into action by a great need. A sad trouble overshadowed her home. Her young daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. Parent and child were separated by an impassable barrier more terrible than death. But her faith was not moved. She did not rebel. She felt that this, like all other sorrows, was one of the eddies of life meant to sweep us from its flowery banks, that in its deeper currents we may be borne nearer to God. It was the need of another, which she had made her own, that brought her to Christ. I have no sympathy with the complacent spirit which makes men in their days of strength, and ease, and safety, think they have no need of Christ. We always need Christ. Sin cannot be overcome and life is flat and insipid without Him. But if any have no sense of personal peril and need, there are wounded or fallen ones around them whose need they ought surely to make their own. There are heavy-hearted mourners in your street, tempted and fallen ones on every side, and little children just launched upon the waves of this troublesome world. Will you not for their sakes lay hold upon eternal life, that in their hour of peril and distress you may hold out to them the sympathy and succour of Jesus Christ?

And is not the need of your own heart great? Every unregenerate heart is Satan's home, he has a permanent right of entry, and no outward reformation of life is any guarantee against the return of unclean spirits in sevenfold strength. Your need is great indeed if the unclean spirits of pride, selfish-

ness, covetousness, and unbelief are in possession of your heart.

This woman's great faith triumphed over great obstacles. She came calling upon Christ as the Son of David and unfolding her trouble. Her suit was in perfect order, she came begging a favour, not claiming a right. But He met her with silence. He answered her not a word. "Oh ! strange sight," as St. Augustine puts it, "The Word has no word, the fount of life is sealed, the great Physician has no healing balm." Yes, Jesus turned His back upon her. Her first cry was raised probably in the house. Christ had gone there, it seems, seeking privacy. "But He could not be hid." The ointment betrayed itself and this woman was drawn to Him. Oh that our lives were like that house on the borders of Tyre and Sidon. That something of the fragrance of the indwelling Christ may steal forth from our hearts to the needy ones around.

Jesus however left the house taking no notice of the woman, so she followed him into the street crying piteously. She overcame silence by persistence, for the disciples came to her aid. Not through any real sympathy for her, but because they valued their own ease and dignity. Her persistent entreaties made her a nuisance and they longed to be rid of her.

But now comes a second rebuff. Silence becomes open refusal. "I was not sent," Jesus announced, "but unto the lost sheep of the House of Israel." The answer was the truth, but it seemed a very hard truth. Christ was not insensible to the needs of the "other sheep" not of the Jewish fold, but though He would shortly say "Them also I must bring," the work of bringing them in was left to His disciples in the new dispensation after Pentecost. He was a missionary to the Jews alone, and not the Gentiles. What can this poor woman do when

faced by this apparent sectarianism of Christ, this mystery of the sovereignty of God's distinguishing grace in choosing out one nation and sending His Son to that nation particularly? She did not stumble over it. She did not deny God's sovereign right to show mercy upon whom He will. She left theology alone and appealed to the tender compassion of the Saviour. Pouring over Him the full tide of a mother's grief and anguish she fell at His feet and cried "Lord, help me."

But again the Saviour speaks. One more repulse must test her faith. Refusal becomes sharp reproof. "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to the dogs." What strange severity in One who will not break a bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. But He knew perfectly the strength and persistence of her faith. He would shame the Jews around him, children of the kingdom, by bringing out the full strength of this Gentile's confidence. So He used the ordinary language of the day and calls the Gentile a dog, that she in her turn might show that those who came no nearer in privilege than the household dog, may manifest more faith and love than the children of the family. The woman's reply was a master stroke indeed. She ensnared the Lord in His own words, He being only too glad to be ensnared. Our Lord had softened His reply by using the diminutive form of the word dog. He referred to the little dogs, the children's pets that are allowed inside the house, not the dogs that are without, the wild scavengers of the streets. The woman caught hold of the word, Truth, Lord, yet even for the dogs there are crumbs, and what I ask of Thee is only a fragment of what Thou hast provided. What faith in the fulness of Divine grace! What must the feast have been when such a boon as she was seeking is in her eyes only a crumb, the

portion that falls to one of the household dogs. We do our best to express our sense of the greatness of God's bounty. We say, "Giving doth not impoverish Thee, nor can with-holding enrich Thee," but who ever had such a vision of the abundance of the Feast as to make the greatest boon desired seem but a scrap?

Such faith wins a full reward. "Her daughter was made whole from that very hour." "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." And this is still the measure of the Divine supply. God's bounty is not diminished. His terms are no less generous. It still stands good "if any man lack let him ask." "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." But we too must take the lowest place. While cherishing large conceptions of God's bounty and grace, we must abandon all thought of personal merit or claim. The constant cry of our hearts must be, "We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table, but Thou art the same Lord." Yes, the same Lord on Whom this Syrophenician woman with all her limited knowledge reposed such unlimited faith. Her faith was great simply because she was dealing with a great Saviour. He is the same Lord, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. To know Him truly is to trust Him fully. And all things are possible to him that believeth.

IV

QUELLING A FATHER'S FEARS

And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name ; and when he saw Him, he fell at His feet, and besought Him greatly saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death : I pray Thee, come and lay Thy hands on her, that she may be healed ; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him ; and . . . there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead ; why troublest thou the Master any further ? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And He suffered no man to follow Him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And He cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when He was come in, He saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He taketh the father and mother of the damsel, and them that were with Him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi ; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked ; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And He charged them straitly that no man should know it ; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.—MARK v. 22, 23, 35-43.

Quelling a Father's Fears

SO the miscellaneous crowd were turned out before Jesus did this mighty work and raised the child to life again. And we do not wonder at it. Their unbelief would have chilled the father's faith and hindered the exercise of the Saviour's power.

Jairus had brought the Lord Jesus to that chamber of death, confident that He had power to raise the dead. The crowd received Him with laughter and scorn. They were sure the child was dead. They scoffed at the suggestion that Christ could raise her from that slumber. They were insolent in their scepticism. They saw that Death had claimed its prey. Jairus, looking with the eye of faith, saw that Death's Lord and Master was at hand. And Jairus' view was the reasonable one. He had exercised the sounder judgment. It is not reasonable to assume that nothing exists outside the sphere of sense and that there is no power beyond the forces of this material world. This Jesus of Nazareth had already wrought great wonders. It was not unreasonable to believe that the same power that had cleansed a leper with a touch and stilled a great tempest with a word could overcome even death itself. It was splendid faith, bold and courageous faith, but it was in no way contrary to reason.

These noisy people who received Jesus with ridicule and scorn they were the short-sighted and unreasonable ones. A thoughtful man never scoffs.

But there are many thoughtful and earnest Christians whose faith falls far short of that of Jairus. They know indeed that nothing is too hard for the Lord, but they do not turn to God, in their time of need, with the same confidence that Jairus showed. This is not because miracles have ceased. For God still lives and works and answers prayer. There are not the manifest interferences with the laws of nature (the laws of matter one ought rather to call them), and yet sometimes events coincide so marvellously that the guiding together of the incidents cannot be reasonably ascribed to blind chance. A Father's wise and loving direction is manifest. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of. Man's extremity is still God's opportunity. But the Divine order and regulation must be observed.

We must seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Yes, the needs of the soul must always have precedence given them over the needs of the body. Both are a matter of concern to our Father in heaven. But God would have us learn to put first things first. It is part of our discipline on earth. So we must put eternal interests before temporal interests, spiritual needs before material needs. God will deal with our circumstances, but He must deal first of all with our inward selves. This is the greater and more difficult work. When once the moral miracle is wrought—when the worldly and covetous disposition is changed, or the unforgiving spirit cast out, or the evil heart of unbelief removed—when we learn to labour for the meat which endureth, and to walk by faith instead of sight, then God works the material deliverance.

He adds the meat which perisheth ; He makes the bitter waters sweet ; He gives us, in His own good time, the desire of our hearts.

So when we seek some relief or boon for body or estate, we must come to God in a submissive spirit, our faith must be expressed with resignation. Our minds must be set upon serving God, not upon inducing God to serve us. But where moral evil of any kind is concerned it is different. Sin is a disease so deep-rooted, so deadly, so desperate, that we must never be content with it. Resignation here is out of place. Soul health and soul prosperity we may seek with a determination that accepts no denial. Yea, we must honestly desire to prosper and be in health in all worldly and material things, only as our soul prospereth. The world professes to believe that sin does not matter. The man of God is more and more convinced every day that nothing matters but sin. Jairus came to Christ seeking a temporal boon ; Christ so dealt with him that in obtaining it he received at the same time a deep spiritual blessing.

He came to Christ over a child as good as dead. He had left his little daughter *in extremis*, and in his agitation when presenting his petition he spoke of her sometimes as dying and sometimes as already dead. With Christ it mattered little whether she was dying or already dead. With us it makes all the difference. While there is life there is hope. Once really dead, the spirit is banished to that unseen world where no human aid avails and whence no tidings reach us. But Christ is Lord of both living and dead. The keys of Death and of Hades hang at the girdle of Him who rose again the third day. This is what we want in this sin-cursed world. Nothing short of resurrection power can fully meet our need.

We are surrounded by those who are dead in trespasses and sin. In some cases, thank God, corruption has not yet commenced. The young man is still truthful and pure. The daughter is still modest and obedient. But there is no sign of spiritual life, no evidence of grace. There is no warmth of love, no clearness of vision, no strength of character. They go with the stream. They yield to temptation. The one thing needed is definite contact between the dead sinner and the life-giving Saviour. They have perhaps been baptized and confirmed. Devout parents hoped that the necessary contact had taken place in answer to believing prayer, when the seal of the New Covenant was affixed according to Christ's command in holy baptism. The minister confidently believed the same a little later when on the confession of personal repentance and faith, God's fatherly blessing was formally administered with the laying on of hands. But the signs of spiritual life, the love of prayer and Holy Scripture, the sense of sin and the joy of pardon, are still lacking, and we dare not sacrifice the eternal welfare of our friends to any theories of sacramental grace. But thank God definite contact with the Saviour is still to be had. Each one may come to Christ as really as Jairus did, with the cry, "My soul is at the point of death. Yea, I fear that it is still wholly dead, but lay Thy hands upon me ; yea, speak the word only and Thy servant shall live." But come with the faith of this Jairus, for it was a true and living faith. Notice some of its special features.

1. True faith never abandons hope. The little girl was dying. He was sorely tempted to abandon himself to anguish and complaint. Was he not a true son of Abraham and ruler of the synagogue ? Why then had God dealt so hardly with him ? For

twelve years the child had been the joy and sunshine of his house. Surely God did not mean to snatch her away. So he hurried off to try and find Jesus.

It was not easy to tear himself away from that child's bed over which death was already hovering, or to leave the sorrowing mother who leant so much upon his presence and sympathy. He had perhaps to combat the unbelief of the household as well as the despair of his own heart. For the servants came to him afterwards with something like a triumphant "we told you so" in their tone, when they bade him cease from troubling the Master, because the child was already dead. But his faith triumphed. "It isn't good-bye sweet child, I am going to fetch One who will be sure to make you well." "Don't lose heart, dear wife, your tears will soon be wiped away and we shall have our girlie playing about the house as in the old days." His was a faith which refused to abandon hope. How sorely we need such hope to-day, and how reasonable such faith is. Pessimism and despair are inexcusable. For Jesus lives, sin is atoned, death is vanquished, Heaven is opened to all believers—what more could we wish? Whatever the pressing cause of anxiety, be it the rebellion of your own heart, or the sickness of a loved one, or some tangled web in your own domestic life, the unfaithfulness of a Church, or the sin of a nation, or the darkness of the heathen world, Jesus Christ is sufficient for all. If we have real faith in Him we shall never abandon hope.

2. But true faith is often severely tested. Jairus came to Jesus, and bowing reverently before Him, he boldly confessed his faith in the Saviour's power to bring back to life the dead child. There was no hesitation in his appeal. It was not, "If thou canst do anything, help me." But "Come and lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live." He had

had no visible proof that Christ could raise the dead, but he felt no doubt about it. Yet his faith was not quite perfect. He thought the Master's presence essential. He did not say like the centurion, "Speak the word only and my servant shall be healed." He ventured to prescribe the method of the cure. There was perhaps an element of superstition in his faith. He may have thought that the restoring virtue was in the hands he wished to see placed upon the child. But the faith was splendidly real and bold. So the Saviour rose at once and went with him.

Then came the first test. Another needy one with faith as strong as that of Jairus had stolen through the crowd, and by touching the Saviour's hem secured immediate healing for the body. The Saviour stayed therefore to inquire after this sufferer and to speak to her. It meant delay at a time when, humanly speaking, delay would be fatal. And evidence was soon forthcoming that the delay had proved fatal. The servants came up and bade him desist from troubling the Master, because the child was already dead.

Poor Jairus! We who know how the human heart clings to the last strand of hope can realize what a sore blow this was. He had spoken of the child as dead, but the hope was strong in his heart that Christ would find her still living. He had boldly declared that Christ was master over death, but he was secretly hoping that He would only have to combat with weakness and disease. Christ saw how the delay and the servants' despair were weakening the father's faith, so at once, before the man had time to conceive or express the unbelief and fear that were rising in his heart, Jesus said (His first words to Jairus), "Fear not, only believe." And this word of Christ sustained the father's trembling faith.

Why shouldest thou fear, Jairus, even if the child be dead? The grave is not the boundary of Jesus' power. Thy misery is not beyond the reach of His compassion. Nay, rather thy case has now become more worthy of His help. The greater deliverance which you now need will bring greater glory to His grace and power. So "Fear not, only believe."

And this word of Christ prevailed. The strongest faith is never very far from unbelief. How often when patience is tried by delay and our bright hopes are damped by an unexpected reverse we sink in a moment from the mountain-top of expectation into a very abyss of despair. At such times nothing but a word from the Master can help us. But when He speaks to our hearts through His word and by His Spirit all is well.

He forbids fear because it is incompatible with faith. If you fear, you do not believe. Only believe and you will cease to fear.

Be silent all who despise faith. Faith expels fear. Obedience is only the manifested energy of faith.

3. True faith always triumphs in the end. What a full reward the father received! The unbelieving crowd were turned out and only the father and mother with the three chosen disciples remained, while Jesus taking the child by the hand called back the spirit that had fled, and with minute care ordered them to give her meat. Oh the joy of that hour! The father's intense satisfaction, the mother's overflowing delight, and the shame-faced congratulations of the household with humble apologies for their insolence and unbelief. Faith will surely triumph. A foretaste of Eternal glory is given us now, but the final and complete triumph will be when Jesus comes. Then those who refused to believe in any power beyond the material

forces of this world will learn their folly, and all those who through the night of doubt and sorrow have held on to the living Christ, singing day by day, "O Lord, in Thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded," shall reign with Him for ever.

V

REFUSING SATAN'S BRIBE

Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.—MATT. iv. 8, 9, 10.

Refusing Satan's Bribe

THERE are three temptations recorded, and this, if we accept St. Matthew's order, is the third and last.

Man is spirit, soul, and body, and each part of his being renders him liable to temptation. Christ had proved Himself master over His body. No passing weakness, no natural desire to escape hunger and pain could turn Him from the will of God. Christ had proved Himself also master of His spirit. He could believe without seeing. He would not experiment with God in order to obtain a sign from heaven. So now Christ must prove Himself master over His soul. The human soul of Jesus, formed by the two parts of His human nature, the spirit akin to deity, and the body akin to matter, this human soul, which is the real man within, that acts and desires, and plans and wills, is now to be tempted.

Having failed in his attempts to overthrow our Saviour's confidence in God, Satan now tries to entice Him to open apostasy. It seems the most clumsy, the least skilful and subtle of the temptations. How could He Who had known the glory of heaven be turned aside by the glory of this world? So some have thought that Satan's craft and cunning had deserted him, that he now adopts a reckless

frontal attack, because too infuriated by repeated failure to devise a more seductive plan. But the Saviour's reply is an indication that it was not so; the indignant refusal, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," shows that the attack had gone home. It was indeed a strong and powerful temptation, and one under which the noblest of men have fallen.

In a moment of time, from some great mountain height, how far by supernatural vision we do not need to inquire, there is revealed to our Lord all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He sees the military glory of Rome and the power of that consolidated empire. He sees the artistic glory of Greece, still supreme in poetry and philosophy and all fine arts. He sees the commercial glory of Carthage and Alexandria and Antioch, and all the voluptuous splendour of Egypt and the far East, with their ancient and unchanging civilization.

The prospect must have been dazzling beyond all conception to one accustomed to the quiet home at Nazareth. But the temptation was not merely one to self-gratification or self-glorification. This strange offer to place at the Saviour's disposal all the powers of the earth seemed to open up unlimited opportunities of doing good. This was the point of the temptation. Never had the powers of the earth been prostituted to more unworthy uses. The Imperial throne was, as a rule, seized by the most unscrupulous general who could, by bribery and intrigue, force himself into power. Greek art had become the unblushing handmaid of vice. Even in Jerusalem, amongst God's own nation, bribery and corruption abounded, and the sacred offices of the Temple were sold to the highest bidder. But now Satan offers to place all the sceptres of the world, all the reins of power, all the strings of influence into

the hands of Jesus. He, the Prophet of Nazareth, should mount the throne of the Cæsars and direct the Imperial Government. He shall control the Jewish Sanhedrim. He shall inspire and use for His own purposes the powers of Greek art and learning. The Forums, the Schools, the Theatres, the Markets, the Temples, the Oracles of the world shall all be subject to Him. He shall carry out His Divine Mission by their agency, Satan himself placing all these under His control.

It was indeed a bold scheme, a colossal bribe, and Satan is never more successful among men than when he comes as patron and ally. Remember that the instinct he was appealing to on this occasion was a right and noble one. The love of power is natural to all noble minds. The purest instinct of the sinless Jesus would feel intensely the attraction exercised by the powers of the world, and would be stirred by the thought of using all these for the glory of God. It is a mark of a mean soul not to appreciate earthly glory, not to be stirred by such a pageant, for example, as London witnessed at the recent Coronation. And that is a very imperfect parallel of the vision revealed to our Lord, and the effect it must have produced on Him. We all know the feeling of enchantment and ecstasy when, under the influence of beautiful music, or some thrilling story, we seem lifted out of our narrow sphere into an enchanted world, where difficulties vanish and a bright vision of glory charms and thrills our soul. Our Lord's experience must have been something like this, and compared with the enchanting vision which Satan placed before Him, the path which God had marked out seemed utterly prosaic, and slow, and painful. Might not Satan's way be the best ?

Was it not possible to make terms with the

arch-enemy of Heaven by a slight conciliation, and thus gain over to God all the powers of the kingdoms of the world? Was the Cross the only way of winning the world? Was there no avoiding the bitter pains of Gethsemane and Calvary?

Must the sons of God always be rejected and unknown? Must the apostles labour and suffer and die? Must martyrs be slain with the sword and stoned? Must the scourge of Mahomet sweep away like the Flood the unfaithful Churches of Christendom? Must the fires of Smithfield purge God's kingdom from the evil growths of centuries of ignorance and superstition? Must wars and rumours of wars disturb the peace of the world, and must Antichrist be finally revealed, deceiving all men?

Was this the only way in which God's kingdom could be established among men, and the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God? Was not Satan's plan a possible alternative? Could not Jesus borrow the powers of the world, and use them to bring about the purposes of God?

Now Satan's offer was not altogether a vain one, nor was his promise beyond his powers of fulfilment. He is called in the inspired word "the prince of this world," "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air." It was no vain boast when he said concerning the power and glory of the world, "It is delivered unto me, and unto whom I will I give it." Satan could have influenced the hearts of men, so that they would all have done homage to Jesus Christ. He could have done for Jesus of Nazareth what he will do one day for Antichrist. We learn this when we see the success which has attended some of the false religions of the world, and some of the corrupt forms of Christianity. This is why Mahometanism numbers its hundreds of

millions, this is why the adherents of the Papacy outnumber Protestant Christians.

At the beginning of his career Mahomet must have been a true prophet animated by high and noble Ideals. How did he become the false prophet, as he is so truly named? There must have been some point in his career when he turned aside to form an alliance with Satan. There was some perversion of the truth, some withholding of the light, some discounting of the Divine requirements, by which he entered into a compact with Satan, and gained his patronage. Satan has kept his part of the bargain. The followers of the false prophet have a large share of the power and glory of the kingdoms of men. Turkey was victorious over Greece in the recent war. Islam still dominates in Palestine, in Persia and in Turkey, and it is an offence punishable by death for a Mahometan to receive Christian baptism. Satan has indeed been a powerful patron of Islam, and remember, a system need not be wholly bad to gain the patronage of Satan. It may well be, as it is sometimes said, that a good Mahometan is better than a bad Christian. It is Satan's policy that he should be so. There is no need to make a devotee of Islam drunken or profane, he is so apt a pupil of the devil in falsehood and cruelty, that his master is quite content, even though in everything else he may seem a model of politeness and propriety.

So with the spread of Papacy. It was a noble idea, born of a fervent desire for the furtherance of Christ's kingdom, that all nations should be federated under one supreme and responsible head. In the pursuit of this ideal however a bargain was struck somewhere with Satan. Truth was sacrificed to expediency, the cause of the Church was regarded as identical with the cause of Christ, and anything

which could advance the Church, even forgery and falsehood, was justified, because it was believed to be helping forward the cause of Christ.

Men wilfully forgot that the petition "Hallowed be Thy Name" precedes the petition "Thy kingdom come." They dared to sacrifice righteousness and truth in order to expedite the progress of the Gospel amongst men. They did not realize that the success that seemed to follow from compromise was due to Satan's help, or that a Church thus corrupted (known in Scripture as "the great harlot"), while still nurturing some of the most perfect saints, would become the fruitful parent of infidelity, and one of the chief obstacles to the progress of Christ's Gospel amongst men.

So Satan's offer was not altogether a vain one. Our Lord does not question Satan's power to fulfil his promise. To do so would tacitly imply a liking for the temptation and a desire to possess the powers which Satan offered Him. Without challenging the real value of Satan's patronage, Christ shows that the price to be paid for it is too costly. God demands an undivided allegiance, He will never enter into partnership with Satan. It is written "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." He who, being one with the Divine author has alone the right to amend the Divine Scriptures, adds the word "only" to give point to the quotation. But this being so, any alliance with Satan means apostasy from God. Satan's help can never be acquired without the forfeiture of God's blessing, and God's blessing is all we need at all times. This is the only thing we cannot do without. No one loses by being loyal to God.

But we must be patient and learn to wait God's time. The glory that Jesus rejected on the Mount of the Temptation was surpassed immeasurably

by the excellent glory of the Mount of Transfiguration. His face now marred with pangs of hunger then shone as the sun, and His raiment now soiled with the desert became white as the light. Only for a short three and a half years did he experience pain and humiliation, and now for all eternity He is crowned with glory and honour because He refused the alliance with Satan and tasted death for every man. All the pomp and splendour of Imperial Rome and all the beauty and wisdom of Greece could never bring to the Lord Jesus such glory and honour as the songs of saved sinners whom He loved and washed from their sins and redeemed unto God by His blood. Christ did not lose either in glory or in power through rejecting Satan's offer. Satan's power is great, but it is limited by the things of this world. The devil's patronage may sometimes carry a man to the top of the social ladder, but it cannot give him rest and peace. Satan may fill the cup with outward prosperity, but God adds the bitterness of remorse so that there is no satisfaction in it. Satan may afflict the people of God with sore trials; poverty, sickness, persecution, sorrow may overtake them, but God can free their captivity at any moment and in the darkest night He giveth songs and gladness of heart to those who trust in Him. The third day of resurrection triumph comes sooner or later for every faithful servant. So far as outward success is concerned, Satan's patronage is of real value; the Christian is often called upon to suffer in the will of God for conscience sake. But true inward peace and joy Satan can neither give nor take away.

Learn then to recognize the Tempter when he comes offering his patronage or suggesting an alliance. He promises the business man that he will make a fortune in a few years if only he will

force his conscience and conduct his business on the lines he suggests. He offers popularity and speedy promotion to any who will hide their Christian principles and shut their eyes to fashionable sin. And some who are genuinely desirous to do good forsake the slower old-fashioned ways of true godliness and surrender some of the old foundation truths in order to avoid the charge of being narrow, and win men to God in larger numbers. Yes, the popular fashion of going halfway to meet the world in order to win the world over to God is frequently an unconscious doing homage to Satan in order to secure Satan's patronage of God's work.

The temptation comes through a vision of the power and glory of the world. We shall best meet it by a clearer vision of the power and glory of God. Let the Holy Spirit make real to you the transcendent beauty of things unseen and you will be proof against the fascination of things seen.

Loyalty is the first requisite for successful service. We cannot serve God and Mammon. A pure heart is more important than a successful career. So never trust Satan's promises, but covet and rely upon God's blessing. This will suffice both for this world and the next. This is the one rule for daily life, a golden rule, which brings fulness of joy and strength to all who follow it. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him *only* shalt thou serve."

VI

REVEALING THE LOVE OF GOD

Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them And He said, A certain man had two sons : and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land ; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country ; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat : and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger ! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.—LUKE xv. 1, 2, 11-24.

Revealing the Love of God

A. LOVE UNRECOGNIZED

IT is a pity the phonograph and cinematograph are such recent inventions. We need them both to do justice to this story. It is but an outline that the Saviour gives us, only a few bold strokes, and the picture has to be filled in by our knowledge of that deep mystery, the human heart. We need to catch the tone of the younger son's voice as he twice, and only twice, addresses his father. The difference of tone in the one word "Father," the opening word of each sentence, would make it perfectly plain that a great change had come over him. On the first occasion the word is used just by habit, without a thought of its deep meaning. On the second occasion the word throbs and quivers with the love of a broken and contrite heart. On the first occasion, the one word because of the love that was lacking makes the father's heart ache with sorrow, the second time it is sweet as the music of heaven to his ears.

It is no happy home of love that the parable first presents to us, but a home already spoilt by an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. On the father's side was love indeed ; love that could suffer long and be kind ; love that could wait patiently, act wisely and forgive as God only can forgive. But

among the sons there was no true love. The two young men, though very different in temperament and disposition, were alike in this, that neither of them appreciated the Father's love. It was there, manifest to all who were not blinded by selfishness, but it was unrecognized.

This home was a true picture of the state of Jewish society in our Lord's day. It consisted of two sections, the religious and the reprobate—the scribes and Pharisees, most strict in their religious duties; and the publicans and sinners, who though circumcised and in the Covenant were excommunicated from the privileges of that Covenant and cordially hated and despised by the religious Jews. Many of these publicans and sinners had been brought to repentance by the preaching of John the Baptist and had become earnest and consistent followers of the Saviour. The religious Jews, however, had rejected John's baptism (though in their hearts they knew it was of Heaven) and when they saw sinners repenting and coming back to God would not own themselves in the wrong, and themselves believe in Jesus Christ. They bitterly resented Christ's power of reclaiming sinners, and made it their chief taunt "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

You can see then the setting of this matchless parable. The Lord Jesus is the centre of a crowd of Jerusalem sinners; publicans and harlots are listening to Him eagerly, finding forgiveness, life, and eternal hope in His gracious words; but a good distance away, though still within the compass of the Saviour's voice and carefully observed by Him who could read men's hearts, there is a group of disgusted Pharisees. Instead of rejoicing that the sinful and lost were being reclaimed, they thought religion was being dragged into the mire, and that

by manifesting such sympathy with depraved people Christ was forfeiting all claims to their confidence and respect. It hurt the Saviour to find amongst those who professed to fear God and follow righteousness, such misappreciation of His conduct. He took a rapid look into heaven to comfort His soul. There He saw the angels rejoicing over His divine work. So He sketched before His hearers the contrast as He saw it ; the hideous contrast between the jealous resentment of the Pharisees and the joy of the angels in heaven. The angels' joy was like the joy of kind-hearted neighbours over the recovery of any lost treasure, whether one sheep out of a flock numbering a hundred or one coin out of a set of ten. The bitter resentment of the Pharisees was like the jealous spirit manifested by the elder son who, when his only brother returns after long wanderings, refuses to join in the welcome home.

The two sons represent then the publican and the Pharisee ; the one openly apostate, not attempting to conceal his aversion for home and his preference for the far off country ; the other secretly apostate, keeping at home but without any love for his father. This absence of love is seen in his interview with the father when urged to join in the feast of welcome to his brother. He never uses the word Father, for there was no filial affection in him. He was surrounded by his father's bounty, but he took it all as a matter of course. Though he left the asking to his brother, he was ready enough to take his share of the inheritance, a share which would be double that of his younger brother. But he took all this as his right. He saw no grace or kindness in his father's gift. He kept a strict debtor and creditor account with his father and it was always balanced so as to show the father in debt to him and not he himself in debt to his father. "Lo, these many

years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments ; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." It is the language of a Pharisee who thinks his formal obedience faultless and blames God for not doing more for him in return.

Have you ever felt like this ? You heard, perhaps, of some notorious bad character who, awakened by the preaching of the Gospel and returning to God in true repentance, entered suddenly into fullness of joy and peace in believing. It seemed as if God was not dealing fairly with you. The converted profligate is feasting in the banqueting house, and you who have kept the commandments from your youth up are still without real peace, still without any manifestation in your heart of that kingdom of God which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There is never any feast for the Pharisee.

As long as you take God's love as a matter of course ; as long as you justify yourself, declaring that you have never transgressed God's commandment, and pretending that you have a right to God's favour, you will never know the joy and peace of salvation. A broken heart is the only fount of love. As soon as your heart breaks with a sense of sin you will know the joy of God's forgiveness and the peace that passeth all understanding. This elder son cared nothing for his father, and therefore had no sense of sin. He wanted a kid to make merry with his friends ; but his father's presence had no attractions for him. He thought he had fulfilled his duty by toiling in the fields, he did not see that his father loved him and wanted his love in return. Though a stronger character than his younger brother and able to resist the temptation to a roving life, though no spendthrift but a diligent

and careful man, there was this fatal flaw, he was dead to his father's love.

B.—LOVE DESPISED.

At a Mission held in the North of Scotland some years ago one of the handbills was returned to the Vicar anonymously with two words added, so the announcement read "A Mission for Lunatics." The correspondent in displaying his wit came nearer than he thought to the exact truth. The man who despises the love of God is no better than a lunatic. "He came to himself," we read of the prodigal. All sin is madness. Repentance is the first sign of return to a sound mind and a reasonable judgment. The man who has no reverence for God, no regard for his own interests and no respect for righteousness, is acting the part of a fool or a madman.

It is certainly the act of a madman to forsake a good master, and is not God a good and kind Master? Ask those who have served Him longest. I remember the late George Müller giving his experience at a convention in Birmingham. He had passed his 90th birthday. Seventy years had elapsed since the day of his second birth, his conversion to God. He told of the number of times he had read the whole Bible through on his knees and kept saying "It makes me very happy." He described how in his desire to keep close to Christ he had given up all worldly amusements and again he said "It makes me very happy." Could the devotee of the race-course or card-table or theatre say after seventy years' experience "It makes me very happy"? Those who have the most of this world's prosperity, the highest favourites of fortune, tire the soonest of all the world has to offer them. Pleasure can

never prove the staple food of life. "The world passeth away and the desire for it, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Men never tire of following Christ and doing the will of God from the heart. For the love of Christ passeth knowledge. You can never fathom or exhaust it. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance ; in Thy Name do they rejoice all the day." This is the only life which knows perfect joy, the only service which is perfect freedom. The man who forsakes such a Master is a madman indeed.

And it is madness for the creature to think that he can be independent of the Creator. The son asked for his portion of goods because he wished to be independent of his father. But the goods were his father's, not his own. It is so always. Take the case of the self-made man. The cynical observer says a self-made man always worships his maker. And it often happens that the man who makes his way in the world by the force of his own energy and determination is peculiarly in danger of worshipping himself. Yet the man who has done the most for himself is surely the one who owes most to God. For his energy, industry, and skill are all God's gifts, and the various opportunities which Providence opened out for him are all of God's appointment. There is, too, a deeper sense in which man cannot do without God. The prodigal was soon forced to cry "I perish with hunger." You may exist without God but you are perishing all the time. For your soul needs food as much as your body. And you cannot satisfy your soul except by tasting the goodness of God. Music will not satisfy a soul, Art, literature, science, cannot satisfy a soul. Gaiety, luxury, sensual indulgence, sin cannot satisfy the soul. You can never satisfy your soul

through your body. This is the mistake the world is always making. Having forsaken God their souls are homeless and without food, but they try to satisfy them by multiplying comforts and delicacies and indulgencies for their bodies. So it comes to pass that gross vices unknown to wild beasts are common amongst men. Animals are content with satisfying their bodily appetites and avoid wanton excess. Man seeks to quench the thirst of his soul by wild draughts of sensual indulgence, and it leads to phrenzy and disease. Your soul needs God. Just as surely as your body needs air and sunshine and food and drink and rest and raiment, so your soul needs the robe of righteousness and the peace of God ; the dew from heaven and the bread of life ; the joy of salvation and the hope of the glory of God. Only a madman would dream that an immortal soul could ever be satisfied with the world which passeth away. You are made in the image of God and it is madness to suppose that you can be satisfied without God.

It is madness again to choose a degrading rather than an ennobling service. You say you want to be free so as to have your own way. Will you be free if you do get your own way ? The prodigal had his own way and it led to a degrading service. There are two kinds of desires in your nature, carnal affections and those higher instincts which are in harmony with the Spirit of God. So we pray "that all carnal affections may die," and "all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow" in us. The two cannot flourish together. You must keep the weeds under if you want the flowers to grow. If you want the evil part of your nature to flourish unchecked and unhindered, if you want to be free to sow your wild oats and indulge every passion and appetite, then

you are choosing not liberty but the most degrading slavery. There is no slavery more hopeless, more humiliating, more torturing, than the slavery of evil lusts and appetites. The prodigal devoured his father's living with harlots. He had probably no intention whatever when he left home of disgracing himself so abominably. But once a man seeks for freedom in gratifying instead of controlling his appetites, his evil passions grow stronger rapidly, while his power of control gets weaker and weaker, and he soon sinks into hideous and degrading sins. Freedom is found only in the father's house, constrained by filial love, breathing the atmosphere of the father's presence. God's service is perfect freedom. To turn away from God is to choose a degrading slavery instead of an ennobling freedom. It is indeed the part of a madman.

This madness is full of the basest ingratitude. Watch this prodigal as he goes to his father to make his foolish and heartless demand. "I don't see," he had said to himself often enough, "I don't see why I should not have my own way a bit." But as he knocks at the door and hears the father's kind and cheery "Come in," conscience smites him and he begins to see things differently. There was something in the father's tone that spoke of love already saddened by neglect. For the father had seen what was coming. He knew his son's heart was in the far-off country. He knew the lad was too blinded by self-love and self-conceit to recognize or appreciate his father's love. The voice was kind but sad, and when he entered the room he felt he could not look his father in the face. A stolen glance had noted the honest eyes shining with true love and the kind sensitive face already lined with pain. He fixed his eyes upon the ground and blurted out his cruel demand with only the

faintest conception how like a sword it pierced his father's heart. If men were not blind to God's love they could not find the heart to sin against Him as they do.

Perhaps you wonder that the request was granted. This madman cannot be cured by coercion. God will not accept forced service. Man's highest natural endowment is the gift of free will. It is sorely damaged by sin, but God respects it nevertheless. He will invite sinners and reason with them and urge them, but He will not coerce them. "He leaves us free to make our own mad choice, if so be that sooner or later the very misery which our choice brings upon us may induce us to freely choose Him Who is the Fountain of all Good." If there had been one spark of true love in this son the father would have pleaded with him, but love was dead. And as the sentence had gone forth before, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone," so now the only way to bring this madman to his senses was to let him taste the bitter fruits of sin.

The prodigal then is left to himself and his madness leads to exile and waste and want. He soon felt uncomfortable at home. The man who wants to be independent of God is bound to try and forget God. To disobey God with a comfortable conscience we must get away from everything that reminds us of Him. The far-off country is the land of forgetfulness of God. "Not by space but by affection are we with God or far from God." But this godlessness soon leads to licentiousness. No one parts with religion without meaning to keep to morality, but the moral atmosphere of the far-off country is such that the vilest sins are soon indulged in with unblushing audacity. Every prodigal starts off with a large stock of self-assurance, the result of liberal ideas and excellent intentions, but

mixed with it all is a fatal forgetfulness of home which soon makes him forsake the old standards and wallow in the mire of shameful sins. It is all waste in the far-off country. Not always the waste of licentiousness, but the waste of ungodliness, the waste of prostitution to a lower use of those gifts which should be used for God. The man who forsakes God is bound to waste his wealth of intelligence and love, for it is used apart from God. And this waste always brings want. "There was a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want." Have you felt the famine yet? Have you begun to be in want? "They began to be merry," we read a few verses afterwards. Both heaven and hell commence on earth, and every soul begins sooner or later to experience, even in this life, either the "merry-making" or the want. Which is it in your case?

c.—LOVE REMEMBERED.

"He began to be in want." "They began to be merry." There are two banquets spread before us. God's banquet and the world's. It was the glamour of the world's banquet and the desires it awakened which had kept this prodigal from recognizing his father's love, so that even in his father's house he was dead and without delight in his father's company. Now he has tasted to the full the banquet of the world. The first courses indeed yielded some measure of pleasurable excitement. But that soon passed away and only the bitterness of the misery of sin remained.

The first taste, however, of this bitterness did not lead him to repentance. He did not come to himself the moment he began to be in want. Misery often drives to despair, it has no power of itself to draw

men to God. If all who feel the misery of sin were cured of its madness the far-off country would soon be depopulated. For disenchantment comes and the "great famine" begins in every life sooner or later. The profligate loses his own capacity for pure joy before his youth is over. The bitter remorse and the agonizing tortures which overtake the vicious and licentious are a common subject even for the secular writer. Take for example the lines of Pope. His portion of goods was larger than that of most. Wealth and station and genius were all his, but he lacked the one thing needed. His soul was not anchored to the living Christ, so he was shipwrecked on the rocks of sin.

"My days," he wrote, "are in the yellow leaf,
 The flower, the fruit of love, are gone,
 The worm, the canker, and the grief
 Are mine alone.
 The fire that on my bosom preys
 Is lone as some volcanic isle ;
 No torch is lighted at its blaze—
 A funeral pile."

But even where profligacy and licentiousness are avoided, despair lays hold of all who do not know the love of God. The whole thinking world has begun to be in want. The pessimism of the East, the theory that extinction is the highest bliss, which has dominated for centuries the three hundred millions of Buddhists, robbing them of all stimulus for action and paralyzing their moral powers, has captured the Secularists of Germany and infected many in our own land. "The greatness of man," Pascal said, "consists in thought." These pessimists finding no clue to the mystery of pain believe that man can only be happy when he ceases to think. They are in sore want indeed.

There is no bread in the far-off country of agnostic speculation. There is only one way of escape from this despair. It is to come to Him who said "I am the Bread of Life ; He that cometh to Me shall never hunger."

The prodigal "began to be in want." Did no picture rise before him of the well-filled table in the father's house ? Did he not at once realize the mistake he had made in turning his back upon his father's love ? Doubtless. But there was no willingness to return. The famine did not drive him to repentance. Pride still ruled his will.

"What, give in so soon and own myself wrong ! Return home a penniless tramp and confess myself a fool and a profligate ! No, thank you. I've too much pluck and spirit for that. Another turn of Fortune's wheel and I'll be all right again. Yes, I have run through my money and my friends have treated me shabbily and I'm in a tight place, but I am not going to give in. I'll get a situation, and earn good money and pull through all right." So his evil angel prevailed and "he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country."

Hitherto he had been a stranger. He had not been naturalized, he had not settled down, in the far-off country. He had kept moving on from place to place and the next move at any time might have been homewards. Now he identifies himself with the life of the city, parts with his independence, and comes under the control of one of the citizens. Who are those citizens who prosper and are at home in this land of famine ? It is not unduly pressing the details of this parable to point out that there are some men so contented with sin, so hardened in iniquity, so lost to shame and virtue that no sense of need is awakened in them, no strivings of conscience disturb their false peace. Such willingly

assume the control of any prodigal and are glad to help on the work of hardening and corrupting.

So this hiring himself out to a citizen was a fresh step downwards. Satan is always assuring us that the satisfaction we are seeking lies in one more plunge of sin. Some lingering self-respect, some of the home-instincts, hold us back from the deepest mire, and too often the only result of the famine, of the first misery that follows sin, is a more reckless abandonment to evil.

So he was sent "into the fields to feed swine" and coveted the very husks that the swine devoured, and no man gave unto him. And then he came to himself.

What was it that broke the enchantment, the infatuation, the madness, that had possessed him till now? Some say "the tonic of industry," but there are many who labour hard for the meat which perisheth and have no desire for the meat which endureth. Was it the degradation of his position as a swineherd? For to a Jew swine were unclean beasts. Sometimes a sudden fall into abominable sin, unknown and undreamed of in the earlier days of innocence, awakens men to realize their position. But as a rule the lessons in wickedness are so graduated that the prodigal wallows in the filthiest mire without being made in the least degree uncomfortable. Was it the heartlessness of his quondam friends, the boon companions of his prosperous days? It does sometimes happen that the hollowness of the world's boasted friendship causes men to desire that real and true Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

We are not left to conjecture. The words that fell from his lips, the first moment of returning sanity, reveal to us the influence that had brought him to himself. As he sat upon the ground dis-

consolate, faint and weary, friendless, homeless, penniless, perishing with hunger, he remembered the servants' hall in the old homestead. There, his father's hired servants had bread enough and to spare. They were not left to herd with swine and feed upon the beans of the carob tree. And with that picture of the father's care for his hired labourers, memory, that had been sleeping so long, suddenly awoke and all the past stood out vividly before him in a totally new light. Scales dropped from his eyes. He realized how blinded he had been by self-love and conceit. He had thought that he was hampered by the home discipline and could do so much better as his own master. He had been so sure that he was right and his father wrong. That his views were liberal and up-to-date and his father's narrow and old-fashioned. He did not, of course, like leaving home, but it was all the father's fault. It was so absurd to expect a young man to be governed by all his father's principles. He would soon prove himself right if only he got a chance to choose and act for himself. But now, oh how bitterly he realized his stupid folly! How could he have been so mad? Why there were tears in the old man's eyes as he signed the deed of gift, it was such a husky voice that bade him farewell, there were deep lines of pain in the old man's forehead. How could he have done such a thing? So in the midst of the misery and hopelessness of his condition one fact stood out before him. It was his own father who was so generous to his hired servants, it was that father's son who was perishing with hunger, and his father loved him. So a new thought took hold of him. He began to feel his sin as well as his misery. Even if, a very doubtful if, he could escape from his misery, what about his sin against Heaven and before that kind father? So at last

his mind was clear. Only two courses lay before him. To perish in misery and sin, or to return, however pride might kick against it, to his father.

D.—LOVE TRIUMPHANT.

“But when he was yet a great way off his father . . . ran . . . and kissed him.” “But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” Two blessed butts. Two striking and beautiful exceptions to ordinary procedure. Two manifestations of prompt and generous love altogether out of the way and unprecedented with men, but exactly according to the way and habit of our Father in heaven. The closing scene of this parable is so luminous and transparent that we almost lose sight of the story in the Divine truth that shines through it. From the ragged and starving son, covered with the dust of a foreign soil and coming back to lay his weary head and sick heart beneath the roof-tree that sheltered his innocent childhood, gathered suddenly to his father’s arms in an unexpected embrace; we turn instinctively to the sinful soul, prostrate before the mercy seat of Heaven, burdened and soiled with sin, filled with fearful forebodings and oppressed with a sense of emptiness and unrest, graciously welcomed, pardoned, cleansed, relieved, and suddenly filled with peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. At this point, too, the earthly story has to be forced in order to convey the full heavenly meaning. The young man’s decision to return would naturally be followed by a giving notice to his employers and a long and tedious journey. But our Lord passes over all the intervening steps. Two pictures alone stand out. The prodigal rising up from his perishing to go to his father and the same erring son clasped in his father’s arms, covered with kisses and re-

instated as son and heir. If you say that the one picture cannot succeed the other without a long interval of weary pilgrimages, we reply that God's love is above the limits of any earthly story, and the spiritual reality is just as depicted here. Repentance leading to decision and decision at once crowned with perfect remission and forgiveness. This is the most wonderful thing in the whole parable. The circumstances of the story require a laborious and painful effort, the expectations of the prodigal did not rise above a long time of probation as a hired servant, but God's ways are not as our ways. It is one moment "He arose and came to his father," and the next, "When he was yet a great way off his father . . . ran and kissed him."

But the prodigal took the first step. He did not stop at good resolutions. He acted at once. He arose and came. That is repentance. No repentance is real which stops short of a real coming to God. You cannot forsake sin, unless you return to God, for in your indifference towards God, your secret suspicion of God, your latent enmity against God, lies the root of all your sin. The Thessalonians turned to God from idols. We never really turn from idols unless with our hearts we turn to God. Hence it is easier to give up all sin than to give up two or three special sins. For when you truly give up all sin and turn to God with the cry "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously," the fullness of God's love is manifested to you and the power of sin is broken. If the prodigal had adopted half measures he would never have got home. Self-love strove hard to make him delay his return; it seemed so much more satisfactory to wait and improve his condition before confessing his folly. But sin can never be ended save by repentance. We may put a plaister on our wounded self-respect

by a strong resolution to reform, but we do not forsake our sins until we return to God. You may improve your circumstances and mend your damaged reputation amongst men, but your sin, which is distrust of God and alienation from God, is only increased as long as you stay away from God. "Christ suffered for our sins that He might bring us to God." However religious and moral you may be, until you return to God you make Christ's death of no avail. You add to your sins by delaying repentance.

But see how quick God is to recognize repentance. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him." God's love is quick of sight. He never overlooks any returning prodigal. Your repentance may be small, there may be only the first beginnings of a broken and contrite heart, but God will see it. And it is the most precious thing in the world to Him.

Never listen then to those who tell you that comfort ceases when penitence begins. False comfort ceases. The giddy, reckless spirit that cannot bear to think of death and eternity, that is driven out. But God is never hard to a penitent soul. If there is the least godly sorrow in your heart you shall soon taste of the peace that passeth all understanding. Have you begun to truly repent? Have you left off making excuses for your sin and trying to justify yourself before God? Are you sick of sin and weary of its burden? Do you honestly desire to be free from its bondage? Have you begun to resist temptation and to seek in everything to please God? It may be that your repentance is very fitful and feeble. It needs to be propped up with much help from Christian friends and teachers. But if it be real repentance joined to faith in God's love, then however small it may be

it is worth a whole world, it is as much as any saint of God had at the first, and it will prevail to pull down and cast out the strongest sins, nor shall it cease working till it has led you all the way to heaven.

How prompt, too, God is to show mercy. The father was moved with compassion and ran to meet the prodigal. To indifferent eyes it was only a poor swineherd soiled with his trade, a broken-down dissolute beggar, an ungrateful son, but to the father's eyes, dim with tears of joy that at last his prayers had been answered, it was the lost son found, the dead child come to life again.

How can God be so ready to forgive? An earthly father may shut his eyes to a son's misconduct and forgive as he hopes to be forgiven. But how can the perfect and all-seeing Father in heaven do this? May a righteous Judge pardon the guilty? Can the all-holy God welcome the vile? Yes, indeed, for One who was worthy to be called His Son espoused the cause of fallen sinners, gathering up the erring family into Himself, and Himself bearing their sins and taking their sorrows, and because He, the worthy Son, died for us the unworthy and rebellious, therefore God is prompt to show free, abundant, tenderhearted, sure mercy to the guilty. This is why God is free, without denying His truth and righteousness, to run and welcome the returning prodigal.

Does some one say "God has never run to meet me"? For shame, how dare you think it! What was the meaning of the Birth at Jerusalem, when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth"? What is the meaning of the death at Calvary, when God made the Sinless One to be sin for us? Is not this God running to meet you? Do we stretch the parable if we imagine that

the father ran all the way to the far-off country to welcome the prodigal? Even then we fall short of the full compass of the Divine truth. What is the meaning of the word Emmanuel? It means God with us, not only in our weakness and sorrows, but the Sinless One made sin, the beloved Son made a curse for us. God came all the way to the Cross at Calvary in His eagerness to show mercy to sinners.

See, too, how demonstrative God's love is. We have friends, perhaps, who really love us, but are very slow to show their love. Their manner is cold and formal, they are not demonstrative. But God is demonstrative. He not only loves the sinner but delights to show His love as well, and to make the sinner feel it. The father fell on the neck of his son and "kissed him much." He kissed the past into forgetfulness.

We may all have the Father's kiss. The time and measure of this manifestation of God's love are not, as a rule, the same for all. Let none, therefore, be discouraged if they lack the full assurance of God's love. But God wants you to have it. An old Puritan says "Naked mercies are not enough in God's account for a true penitent, he must have sealed mercies too." The forgiveness should be sealed with a kiss. Naked faith saves. If, without the least feeling of peace and joy, you simply rest upon the promises of God, you are justified in God's sight. But God is not satisfied. He wants to give you the kiss. This assurance of God's forgiveness brings a foretaste of heaven's bliss. You are very poor if you lack it. This, more than anything else, will teach you the sinfulness of sin and the satisfying fullness of God's favour. A deep content, which banished all thought of farther wanderings, filled the prodigal's heart when he felt the father's kiss.

To know and feel the love of God deepens our

repentance and quickens our faith, it will spur us to obedience, support us in sorrow, shield us in trouble, and be our stay, if the Lord tarry, in the valley of the shadow. If you have never felt the pardoning kiss is it because you so seldom partake of the Lord's supper? "The sacraments have a singular virtue to breed assurance of God's love." Those who despise the love token are not likely to have a lively apprehension of the love.

See, too, the generous bountifulness of God's love. The prodigal must not be left ragged and barefooted, hungry and in disgrace. The father's love already manifest to the son must be made known to all the household. There must be no mistake as to what position the prodigal occupies, what footing he is on, in the old home. He is to be clad as a member of the family, the honoured guest, the free son, the trusted coadjutor, and a feast must be prepared to give expression to the joy that fills the hearts of father and son alike.

The sudden elaboration of detail in a parable so simply outlined before, invites a closer interpretation. "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him."

Do you say, however God may love me, I am not fit for His presence? My clothes reek of sin. The habits of my life are evil and unclean. Well, if like Joshua the High Priest, you feel yourself to be clad in filthy garments, if sinful thoughts and desires cling to you like a tight vest, then listen. The best robe is here for you to wear. Christ our Righteousness and our Sanctification is this best robe. There is none like it. As our Righteousness He covers our guilt. As our Sanctification He overcomes our depravity. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only garment to cover the shame of your wickedness. He is the only ornament to

hide the deformity of your disobedience. He is the only armour to protect your weak and vulnerable soul. Do you say "I cannot put on Christ"? The Holy Ghost will be your Armourer. As the servants clothed the prodigal and God clothed Adam and Eve in Paradise, so the Holy Ghost will clothe you with the living Christ, and in place of the old disposition, the old temper, the old malice, the old wickedness, there shall be the love of Christ, the patience of Christ, the strength and purity of Christ in your inward man.

Then the ring, to be used as a signet ring, and making the prodigal to be heir as well as son, represents the gift of the Holy Ghost, sealing us as sons and heirs. The shoes are the preparation for service, for the highest mark of confidence that the father could give was to use this son in special service, to warn other sons and rescue other prodigals. We are all saved to serve. We all need "the preparation of the Gospel of peace," that, with our feet shod, we may be ready to run on God's errands of mercy and grace. And the feast itself, what is it but the joy of a forgiving God over a forgiven sinner and the joy of a forgiven sinner over a forgiving God?

Such bountiful and demonstrative love swept away all the prodigal's reluctant fears and helped him to take the place of a son. The father's kiss unlocked his lips and gave him courage to confess. Something in the warm pressure of the father's arms made him break off in the middle of his prepared speech. He could not ask to be made a hired servant when he found himself treated as a son. Unworthy indeed he was, but only a false humility would lead him to reject such gracious love. Had he gone to the servants' hall and taken up some of the menial duties there, it would only have fed his pride. While saying to himself, My place

is here, I am not yet fit for the father's table, he would be cherishing the thought that some day he would be fit and able to draw near with less of the crushing sense of unworthiness. The prodigal felt more truly humbled when he sat down to the fatted calf wearing the robe and shoes and ring than when he was perishing among the swine. Depend upon it, the humility which refuses God's favour is full of pride. True, indeed, you deserve to perish, but God chooses to pardon and save. You show genuine humility in taking the place God assigns you. Nothing humbles like the grace of God. You say, I have not repented enough, so I cannot believe God forgives me. What pride then is in your heart ! Though you live to be a hundred you will never have repented enough, and certainly you will not deepen your repentance by doubting God's pardoning love. Repentance is always deeper after forgiveness because forgiveness brings home to us more clearly the love we have sinned against. When he found himself an honoured guest at the father's board, his wasted cheeks still warm with the father's kisses, then it was that the prodigal's repentance was most deep. Let us magnify the grace of God, Who still receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

PART III

Defined in the Christian's Creed

I

SEVENFOLD KNOWLEDGE

We know that the Son of God is come.—1 JOHN v. 20.

Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins.—
1 JOHN iii. 5.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.—1 JOHN iii. 14.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.—1 JOHN v. 19.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.—ROM. viii. 28.

We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building of God.—2 COR. v. 1.

We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, or we shall see Him as He is.—1 JOHN iii. 2.

Sevenfold Knowledge

CHRISTIANITY then is a religion of certainty. We have not followed cunningly devised fables. We do not depend upon unproved theories and speculations. We rest on facts of history, certain and immovable. These two words "we know" are the keynote of St. John's first Epistle, they occur again and again in its five chapters. Indeed the Apostle puts forward this sure knowledge as the test of godliness. "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God."

Now there is a great deal that we do not know. The seed cast into the ground springs up and bears fruit, "we know not how." All life is full of mystery. The honest student is well aware how quickly he reaches the limits of certain knowledge. And this is as true in religion as in science. It applies to the Life of God in the soul of men quite as much as to the life of the animal or vegetable world.

But while our knowledge is thus limited, it is certain as far as it goes. We do not know how the two natures, perfect Godhead and perfect Manhood, are joined in the one Person. We do not know how Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a Pure Virgin. We do not know how the precious blood shedding makes atonement for sin, nor how

the dead Christ was raised to life again, and the living Christ dwells in the hearts of His believing people. Our knowledge of these as of many other subjects is enwrapped in mystery.

While, however, it is only here and there that we can say we know, these points are sufficient to satisfy all the claims of conscience and heart. We know that the Son of God is come and we know that He is able to keep that which we commit unto Him. Hold fast then to the certainties of our Holy Faith. I know that "finality is the fortress of fools." Faith must have room to grow. Pot-bound plants never thrive. Intellectual suicide is a serious breach of the sixth commandment. The full meaning of any verse of Scripture has not yet been exhausted even by the ripest and most learned Saint that ever lived. But if we are to make progress in spiritual knowledge we must start from certainties. We shall learn nothing truly until we are able to say, "I have found the Christ" who is the truth. Most certainly the river of knowledge deepens and widens as it reaches the ocean, but a river without bank becomes a marsh.

This then is the starting point for Christians. We know that the Son of God is come. It is a simple matter of history. It is absolutely certain that two great men, Lord Shaftesbury and General Gordon, lived and died towards the end of the nineteenth century, winning the admiration of all good people for their piety and philanthropy. So it is absolutely certain that the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of Whom was the inspiration of the lives of those two good men, lived and died at the beginning of the first century. Indeed so certain and of such far-reaching consequence is this fact that it serves to divide the flow of time, and the succession of centuries, which used to be numbered from the founding of Rome, is

now numbered from the birth of Christ. The world has been a new world since men could say, "We know that the Son of God is come."

But was He the Son of God? This is the question that divided society during His days upon earth. The Jews hesitated for some time before deciding it, they waited until the influence of the Baptist's testimony had passed, for politicians are powerless against preachers if they utter God's truth fearlessly, but they decided at last. So we find them saying, "We know that this man is a sinner." And they had the courage of their convictions, for they tried to kill Him. "For a good work we stone Thee not but for blasphemy; and because that Thou being a man makest Thyself God." So Christ was condemned to death on the charge of blasphemy, and the Roman governor was forced to confirm the decision, and sentence Him to the Cross. All this is as certain as the battle of Waterloo, or the siege of Mafeking.

Now comes the point of dispute between Christians and Jews. The Jew says, "He died as a blasphemer and an impostor." The Christian says, "He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." And Hebrew Christians though they were, they changed their Sabbath Day from the seventh day to the first day of the week, from the day in which God rested from the labours in creation, to the day in which Jesus Christ rose from the dead. The Jew says, "We know that this man is a sinner." The Christian says, "We know that He is the Son of God, because He rose from the dead." There are some eight millions of Jews in the world to-day. There are some four hundred and ninety millions of Christians who believe that Jesus rose from the dead. Yes, in spite of the denial of the Jews, the testimony

of the Apostles prevailed. And no wonder, for it was a matter in which the truth could be so easily ascertained. The dead body of Jesus was laid in Joseph's sepulchre. What became of it? The Jews had only to produce it to show the falseness of the Apostles' witness. If, as they declared, the Apostles had hidden it, they certainly could never have persuaded the Christians that He was risen from the dead. Christianity most certainly was not founded on a fraud. No indeed, "we know," we are certain "that the Son of God is come."

2 And starting from this certainty every department of human life is irradiated with Divine light and comfort. If you want a rich feast, take your Bible and mark all the passages where you find the words "we know," "ye know." We start with 1 John iii. 5, "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins." And so completely did He do it, that the Apostle adds in verse 14 "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." You know what this death means. It is the wages of sin, it is the condemnation which rests upon every man who is brought in guilty by God's Holy Law. How can you escape from this condemnation? Your guilt is as certain as your existence. No excuses can do away with it. You cannot shift the blame of your wrong-doing either upon your parentage or your circumstances. The fault is, at the bottom, your own. And certainly no future amendment can cancel it. If you spent all your remaining days without flaw or blemish, it would not diminish your present guilt one iota. You cannot make the future atone for the past. How then can you escape from death to life, from condemnation and guilt to righteousness and acquittal? Only in one way, i.e. by Him who was "manifested to take away our sins," whose blood "cleanseth from all

sin." And when, with true faith, you believe in Him, you too will be able to say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

This then may be a matter of certainty. It is not we hope, we trust, but "we know." For the change is so tremendous that it is difficult to conceive how it can take place in any one without being consciously recognized. No arguments could shift the blind man from his assured knowledge. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." If you have really passed from death unto life, you ought to know it. And the reason the Apostle assigns will not seem to you an insufficient one. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and against the people of God too. No epithets in the present day are too scornful to be flung against those who say with the Apostle, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." The fact that you now love those whom you once cordially hated is very good evidence that you have passed from death unto life.

But pass to another "we know." It is Rom. viii. 28, "We know that all things work together for good to those that love God." The coming of the Son of God has hallowed the whole range of human life. He has tasted not death alone, but poverty and toil, solitude and temptation, suffering and sorrow, disappointment and rejection for us. And in tasting these He has robbed them of their sting.

Every ill that human flesh is heir to He has borne, and by His touch He has transformed it into a possible means of grace. The world says "We must hope it is all for the best." The Christian says, "We know that all things work together for good, even to the being conformed to the image of His dear Son, in the case of all who truly love God, Who is the highest good."

Ill that He blesses turns to good,
 And unblest good is ill ;
 And all is right which seems most wrong,
 If it be His sweet will.

But once more. The past is settled, covered by atoning blood. The present is provided for, enriched and provisioned by the living Christ. The future too is equally secure. "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a Building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens !" 2 Cor. v. 1. So we are not tormented by fears of purgatory. Nor do we pretend to solve all the mysteries of the spirit world. It is enough for us that "absent from the body" means "present with the Lord," and there is no purgatory where He is.

And we do not expect to die. We hope to be alive on the earth when Jesus comes. The sky, not the grave, is our goal. True, "it is not yet made manifest what we shall be." The conditions of Heaven pass man's understanding. But one thing is revealed, "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Are not these certainties worth possessing ? Are they yours ? Is your religion a matter of heart as well as of the head ? Surely it is worth any sacrifice of sinful and doubtful things to be able to say with confidence, "We know that we have passed from death unto life." The world is full of agnosticism and despair. It has no certain knowledge and no sure hope. Learn, people of God, to possess your possessions, to know what you know. Give men not your doubts but your convictions. Face the world, and testify with all holy exaltation, "We know that the Son of God is come."

II

“WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?”

While the Pharisees were gathered together Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? They say unto him, The Son of David.—**MATT. xxii, 41-42.**

“What think ye of Christ ? ”

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

“**W**HAT think ye of Christ ? ” You are accustomed on Christmas Day to meet in the House of God and celebrate His birth.

Is your presence on such occasions only a matter of custom and good bringing up, or does it spring from an intelligent apprehension of His meetness to be worshipped ?

What do you think of Christ ? It is certainly unreasonable not to think of Him at all. He is the greatest phenomenon in all history. There is nothing in all creation greater than man, and Jesus Christ is the King of men. Study as you please the religions of the world, there is no life to be compared with the life of Jesus of Nazareth, there is no character so perfect as the character of the Carpenter’s Son, there is no personality so full of imperishable influences as He Whose birth in the manger we celebrate to-day.

To mention only one point, the sinlessness of Jesus marks Him out as different from all other men. In all the accounts of His approaches to God, there is not one word that speaks of any sense of sin. In all the gracious words He uttered to encourage the sinful sons of men to come to Him, there is not a shadow

of a suggestion that He was one with them in their defilement and guilt. His bitterest enemies, those who were plotting to destroy Him, could not bring a single accusation of moral evil against Him. He is not only separate from sinners, He is equally distinguished from all saints. The holy ones of earth are conscious of their failure, and their progress is often through sharp conflict and bitter tears. Jesus Christ, though He suffered under temptation, was absolutely master over all the powers of evil that were arrayed against Him. He could say, "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in Me."

And Jesus Christ introduced a new moral character into human life. Men may refuse His doctrine, and stumble over His cross, but no one can improve upon His practical goodness. The Christian character is perfection. Think of the moral qualities which are generally associated with Christmas. Christmas is the time of forgiveness. It is the season of peace and good-will. Family disputes are hushed, private quarrels are made up, everybody seeks to be on good terms with all men at Christmastime. It is Christ alone who taught us to forgive as we hope to be forgiven. And Christmas is a time of love. Free spontaneous love overcoming natural selfishness and leading men to delight in giving, this is another characteristic of this joyful season. And another grace should be conspicuous at Christmastime. Who can read of the Son of God born in the stable of a country inn, without feeling that humility is essential to Christ-likeness. It is from Jesus Christ alone that men have learnt the beauty of true humility.

So from whatever point of view we look at it, because of His unique character, because of the influence he exercised, because of the permanent change He has wrought in our conception of good-

ness and holiness, Jesus Christ is the greatest phenomenon in history, and it is unreasonable not to think of Him at all.

But we may go a step further. The essence of vital Christianity consists in right thoughts of Jesus Christ.

On a memorable occasion in Caesarea Philippi, Christ put the question to His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter at once gave utterance to the conviction which had gradually become more and more clear and definite in his own mind. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he replied, and Christ commended him for the faith he confessed and stated that He would found His Church on that very rock, that is, on right views of Himself.

John the Baptist said of himself, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," that is to say he declared emphatically that his personality was nothing, his message everything. All great teachers have declared the same. You can measure the greatness of any human teacher by the clearness with which he says in effect "Do not think of me, think of what I tell you." "It is my doctrine, the truth I declare that is vital, I, the faltering voice, the imperfect medium conveying it, am nothing." But it is not so with Christ. If we say unto Him, "Lord, show us the Father," He replies, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." If we ask Him, "How can we sinful erring mortals approach the Father?" He answers, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by Me." If we say, "What shall we do, we are hungering after truth, we are thirsting for life?" He replies, "I am the Bread of Life, He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

So from beginning to end Christ preached Himself.

Even when He was about to leave His disciples, though He knew His departure from this world would be one of shame condemned by the highest courts of Church and State, and dying like a common felon, yet He still pointed them to Himself. Yes, Christ continually declared that He would still be all in all to His people. "I will not leave you comfortless." "I am coming to you." "Abide in Me and I in you." "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." "Lo, I am with you always." And so completely did the disciples learn this lesson that the Christian life is described throughout all the Epistles as a life lived "in Christ." A life which draws its inspiration and motive power, not from a dead teacher and the force of His example and instruction, but from a living and present, though unseen, Saviour and Lord.

This makes Christianity exceedingly simple. Approached along the line of philosophy, all religion is full of difficulty and mystery. Men soon get out of their depth, and lose their way in the maze of philosophical research, and so take refuge in agnosticism, i.e. the convenient plea that we can know nothing certain about God or the soul, or the life after death. But Christianity is not so learnt, it comes entirely from thinking about Christ, and the question, "What think ye of Christ?" lies within the power of all men to answer.

We have four genuine accounts of His life on earth, we have abundant evidence of the influence He exercised after His death through His followers. We cannot go very far without meeting amongst our own relations and friends those whose lives and characters are governed and transformed by His influence to-day.

If we had to begin with the question, "What

think ye of God ? ” we might well reply, “ We have not sufficient data to enable us to come to any conclusion.” But when we have to think about Christ, the data are ample and accessible to all, we are entirely without excuse if we do not make up our minds about Him.

We soon find that the question is not merely a historical one. We cannot think about Christ without solemn awakenings of conscience. As we steadily and seriously think of Him, the discrepancies between our lives and His come before us and make us uncomfortable. He brings to us a new ideal of holiness, He casts a new light upon motive, He shows us our sins. So the tables are turned with a vengeance. We began by thinking about Him, we are soon forced to think about ourselves. We meant to pass a calm unprejudiced judgment upon Christ, we find ourselves at once judged by Christ, and we are forced to admit that His judgment of us is authoritative and true.

The Christ whom we meant to find out, finds us out in the very depth of our being and convicts us. Then we have to decide, “ Shall I obey this King of men, whose incomparable life has so wonderfully searched and reproved me, and opened out to me that higher life after which my noblest instincts aspired, or shall I refuse to obey Him and stifle my conviction of His authority and supremacy ? ” Everything depends upon the decision you come to at this point. Right thoughts concerning Christ are impossible unless we obey Him. Obedience is the organ of spiritual knowledge.

With reference to other realms of knowledge, it may be said if any man is willing to read, if any man is willing to study, to compare, to experiment, to examine, he shall know of the doctrine. But concerning spiritual knowledge Christ said, “ If any

man is willing to do God's will, he shall know of the doctrine." So before we come to any theological conception about the Lord Jesus Christ, the moment we seriously study His character and life, a voice within tells us, with unmistakable clearness and authority, that we ought to learn of Him, to follow His example, to do His will. If we obey that voice we soon get to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and He becomes a more abiding power in our daily life ; if we disobey that voice we wander off into the darkness of utter unbelief.

"What think ye of Christ ? " There are only two answers to the question—the answer of the Believer and the answer of the Unbeliever. The answer of the Unbeliever—search and see whether you recognize it as the unvoiced feeling of your own heart—is this, "I hate Him, He doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. He will not leave me to myself, He wants to make my life an appendage of His own. He claims my allegiance and condemns my sins. He is always knocking at the door of the throne-chamber of my will."

The answer of the Believer, as it comes from a heart taught by the spirit of God, is this—"I love Him, He is all I want ; He understands my need ; He loves me, sinner though I am ; I find rest in Him ; I find power over temptation through Him ; I find fullness of joy in Him. Coming to Him I cease to hunger ; trusting in Him I cease to thirst. He is my Lord, I am constrained to yield to Him absolute obedience ; He is my God. So complete is His supremacy over me that I dare not withhold worship and adoration from Him."

These are true thoughts of Jesus. Thus thinking of Him and abiding in Him, your joy, not only at Christmas but at all times, shall be full.

III

WHY A HAPPY CHRISTMAS ?

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel.—MATT. i. 22, 23.

Unto you is born a Saviour.—LUKE ii. 11.

Being (as was supposed) the Son of Joseph.—LUKE iii. 23.

Why a Happy Christmas ?

WE are all in the habit of wishing each other a happy Christmas. We do it *viva voce* with hearty handshake or affectionate embrace. We do it *litera scripta* by letter or gift or Christmas card. And so our fathers and forefathers have done for generations past. Have we good reason for doing this, or is it a sentimental custom which does more credit to our hearts than to our heads? What right have we to expect to be specially glad and merry at Christmas? What reason is there for showing special kindness to our neighbours at this season?

None whatever, if Christmas be only the festival of mid-winter. The fact that we have passed the shortest day and that the sun is on its return journey to bring back to us spring brightness and summer warmth is no sufficient reason either for brotherly kindness or for gladness of heart. But Christmas is not the heathen saturnalia of mid-winter, it is the festival of our redemption, it is the day when we commemorate that supreme intervention of God on our behalf—that wonderful appearing of the kindness and love of God our Saviour—which resulted in the redemption of mankind. The

message of Christmas is concentrated in the words of the angel, "Unto you is born a Saviour," and this is complete justification for the most generous kindness and the most unrestrained gladness. When such kindness has appeared from God to man, should not all men be kind one to another? When God has proved Himself such a Father to the race, can any of mankind forget that they are brothers? When such a redemption has been accomplished, such a Saviour given to men, how dare we give way to pessimistic gloom, how can we entertain any but the brightest hopes for mankind? Surely we do well to "eat and be merry" since sin has been atoned for and the door of the Father's house stands open wide to welcome returning prodigals. Go on then with the English custom, and from your heart wish every friend and neighbour a merry Christmas, but be sure and add the only adequate reason for abiding gladness on the part of thoughtful and observant men and women, "Unto you is born a Saviour!"

It is a birth we specially remember at this season and the whole Christian Church throughout the world is a witness to the importance of that birth. Yet it passed almost unnoticed at the time. When not long ago another English prince was born the news was flashed to all parts of the world, but who knew or cared when Mary's Child was born at Bethlehem? A few shepherds learnt the news from the angel and listened with rapture to the heavenly choir. Herod's court was disturbed by the visit of wise men from the East asking "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" But both these events and the cruel massacre of infants at Bethlehem passed away like a nine days' wonder and all had been forgotten when Christ began His public ministry.

We look upon that Birth as the dividing point of

the centuries and every event in history is dated so many years "before Christ" or "in the year of our Lord" according to its distance before or after this the most important event in the history of mankind. At this time, however, it seemed an everyday occurrence, just the birth of a poor woman's first baby. So slowly, indeed, did the world wake up to realize the full significance of the Birth that it was not until 541 A.D. that a certain Dionysius the little, a Christian in Rome, suggested the adoption of it as the central point of the history of mankind. The real importance of an event cannot be always measured by the impression it makes at the time.

This was not an ordinary birth. There is an element of mystery in every birth, but the increase of our race is governed by the law that every child must have had two parents, the father who begets and the mother who bears. But St. Matthew, tracing the descent from Abraham to Christ, and marking each step with the words, "Abraham begat Isaac," "Isaac begat Jacob," and so on, makes a sudden change when he comes to the birth of our Lord. He does not say Joseph begat Jesus but that Joseph was the husband of Mary of whom Jesus was born. He tells us, moreover, that Joseph did not become the husband of Mary until after she had given birth to our Saviour, and further explains how Joseph's scruples were only removed by a direct communication made to him in a dream explaining the mystery of this sacred birth.

So St. Luke, in tracing our Lord's ascent up to Adam, fixes our Lord's relation to Joseph by the significant words, "Being *as was supposed* the son of Joseph," whence we learn that Christ was not really the son of Joseph, Joseph being only His foster, father and that this great mystery was not generally known.

St. Luke's Gospel was written about the year 58 A.D., and while he explains to his readers (after taking special pains as he tells us to obtain accurate information) how the mystery of this wonderful Birth was known to four people, to Mary and Joseph, and to Elizabeth and Zachariah, he makes it equally clear that it was not a matter of general knowledge. The shepherds that hastened to Bethlehem at the angels' bidding were not told that Joseph whom they saw standing with Mary beside the sleeping babe was not the father of the child. Later on, indeed, Mary spoke of him as if he were, saying to the Child Jesus, "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." The frequent references, moreover, to our Lord's brothers and sisters suggest that His parentage was the same as theirs. Certainly to the men of His day our Lord appeared only as the son of the carpenter of Nazareth. The mystery of the Virgin Birth was not a matter of general knowledge.

There was an obvious reason for this secrecy. It was to preclude irreverent curiosity and bitter calumny. The virulence with which the Jews afterwards attacked this great truth, shows the wisdom of keeping it secret until the faith of Christians was firmly established. It was a common experience for Christians to be taunted by the Jews with the illegitimacy of the birth of our Lord. How perfect, therefore, was the Divine foresight which inspired St. Matthew (writing principally for Jewish readers) to select as his first quotation from the Old Testament that Scripture which declares in explicit terms the mystery of that sacred Birth, thus making it plain to his readers that this thing which came to pass at Bethlehem, which even Joseph at first stumbled at and which coarse infidels fling in our teeth to-day, was no wanton deviation from the laws

of nature, but a necessary fulfilment of the Scripture which cannot be broken.

But pagan literature, we are told, abounds in legends of sages and poets who were born of virgins. Certainly, and these legends are as false as the Gospel history is true. No one believed them when written and they had no influence upon men.

They are the fiction of the dreamers of the world while the birth of Christ is the great fact which lies behind all the regenerating force of Christianity. But the counterfeit shows the value of the real thing. These legends reveal a deep rooted instinct that the human race needed a new start. Even pagans felt the tyranny exercised over all mankind by the infection of our fallen nature. They felt that the fatal inheritance of corruption entailed from father to son through all generations would only cease with some birth which should not be a begetting, by the advent of some child who should not be part of the naturally engendered offspring of Adam. This was a true instinct. So Jesus Christ was born of a pure virgin that He might cut off this entail of sin. "To make us clean from all sin" He was made man "by the operation of the Holy Ghost of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother, and that without spot of sin." Surely no more suitable way could be found to mark the entrance into our human nature of the Eternal Son of God than that the body prepared for Him should be prepared by God, in a special and distinctive manner.

This wondrous Birth leaves us without excuse. Since the Virgin was with child—since God became man—since Christ was born to cut off the entail of sin and annex us to Himself, and incorporate us into Himself by the Holy Ghost,

Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

we are without excuse if we remain fallen and unregenerate. The miracle of Bethlehem cannot be repeated, the manifestation of God's kindness and love cannot be surpassed. If that supreme intervention of God on behalf of man which makes Christmas such a season of rejoicing leaves us still carnal and worldly and unregenerate, how can we escape? No new gospel can be desired; no other Saviour can be found; "Unto you is born a Saviour." See to it that you do not remain a single day longer unsaved.

IV

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness ; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . . For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom ; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.—1 COR. i. 17, 18, 22, 23.

We Preach Christ Crucified

ST. PAUL was fully alive to the strangeness and unpopularity of his message. The Cross was an offence both to the cultured Greek and to the devout Jew. It was out of harmony with the spirit of the age. The strong influences of the synagogue, the market place, and the public theatre were all opposed to it. And St. Paul felt this. His quick sympathy and practical instincts made him fully aware of what those around him thought. But he had no intention of altering or adapting his message. He preached not to please but to save men, and he knew that the only message which had any power to do this was the message of Christ crucified.

We would fain take our stand by the Apostle. The twentieth century may seek after many things, but we will know nothing amongst men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The offence of the Cross outside the ranks of the faithful has not in any way diminished. In one sense modern thought is Christianized. So far as all thoughtful men are concerned Jesus Christ stands alone as, beyond all dispute, the best and most influential person in history. Charles Lamb remarked on one occasion to a distinguished company, "Gentlemen, you may say what you like, Jesus Christ stands alone. If Shakespeare were to come into this room we should

all stand up to do him honour, but if Jesus Christ came in we should fall upon our knees and worship." This view is now accepted more or less by all thoughtful people. Christ is everywhere, amongst Jews and Gentiles alike, held in esteem as the perfect example, the patient sufferer, the most advanced ethical teacher, the greatest of philosophers and philanthropists, the founder of that society which so far as it has carried out His teaching has done unparalleled wonders for the progress of civilization and the welfare of mankind.

But the Cross is still a stumblingblock and an offence. Some with strong practical or materialistic instincts care only for social subjects and demand that the pulpit should devote itself to labour questions, the problem of the housing of the poor and kindred topics, but we preach Christ crucified. Some impressed by the power of organized corporate life, and fired by a vision of the glorious possibilities which lie before a united Christendom, are chiefly occupied with ecclesiastical subjects, and seem to claim on behalf of a somewhat mutilated Church a practical monopoly of the healing virtues of the Cross, but we preach not the Church but Christ crucified. Others, impatient of mysteries and refusing to admit any limitations of human knowledge, think that they have eliminated sin by their theories of evolution and scoff at the possibility of atonement or forgiveness, but we preach Christ crucified. If you quarrel with our message you quarrel not with us but with our Divine Master. We are not originators or inventors of a Gospel for the twentieth century. We are not like the Italian street singer who improvises songs to catch the popular ear. We are heralds of the Cross, we are God's messengers commissioned for this very purpose only.

We preach the story of Christ crucified because

our hearts are full of it. You may think us foolish, you may wonder that our minds are never disengaged from this one idea and that in an age of such marvellous progress and discovery we should still hark back to what happened at Calvary nearly 1,900 years ago. But we cannot help it. Our hearts are full of it. Tell me, as you listen again to the story of the Cross, is there any story like it? Was there ever love like the love of the Crucified? Were majesty and conscious sovereignty ever so joined to perfect patience and humility? Did ever sufferer bear himself so nobly? Did ever spotless purity and dauntless truth stand out in such exquisite beauty against hateful bigotry and malice? Does the world tire of its masterpieces in architecture or painting or music? If men want a new Gospel let them produce a new Christ. Where is the life that can be placed alongside the life of Jesus? Where is the deathbed that can compare in pathos and beauty and complete unselfishness with the death at Calvary? We do not grudge any of the heroes of history their due tribute of admiration, but there is not one in whom we do not see the same elements of sinfulness that we find in ourselves. They are all subject to misgivings, conscious of errors of judgment and wanderings of heart. If we want to see human nature at its best without flaw or blemish of any kind we must turn to Jesus Christ. If we want to see love triumphing over selfishness, truth overthrowing falsehood, and purity proved white and immaculate amidst the fiercest temptations we turn to the story of the Cross. There is nothing like it for moral beauty, for ethical perfection.

And our hearts are full of it because we know it was all for us.

A Roman army had completed the conquest of a German province. The vanquished were waiting to

learn their fate. The king, the king's son, the king's son's wife and a number of nobles were standing before the Roman general expecting to be put to death. Before the general could say a word the king's son stepped forward and with passionate entreaties begged that his life might be taken and the rest all spared. To the astonishment of all, the general gave sentence that all should be freely pardoned, that not even one life should be taken. Amidst the shouts of acclamation that greeted such a generous act the wife of the king's son alone remained silent. The king asked her if she had no word of thanks for such a merciful and gracious conqueror, but she replied, "I know not what has happened. I have neither eyes nor ears for any save the man that offered to die for me." Can you wonder if, as week by week, when we receive the Holy Communion, the marvellous words "in remembrance that Christ died for thee" fall on our ears, we feel that this fact eclipses all others, and that our hearts have neither eyes nor ears for any save Jesus Christ who suffered and died for us? We do not wonder that the Duke of Argyll when listening to Rutherford as he preached upon the Cross of Christ called out aloud, "Go on, man, you are on the right string."

The hymn says—

Wakened by kindness
Chords that were broken
Will vibrate once more.

It is so indeed when the kindness of God is manifested to us at Calvary and the gentle touch of the hand that was pierced for our sins is laid upon us. Then the deepest chords of our nature vibrate and the sweetest of all music begins in our souls.

And the Bible is full of Christ crucified. The

whole itinerary of Christ's sufferings was mapped out by the prophets. Bishop Hall declared that it could be proved that Christ on His way from the garden to the Cross, the grave and His resurrection, fulfilled some thirty predictions in Holy Scripture. The Old Testament is full of Christ crucified. So are the Gospels. The shadow of the Cross was never absent from the Saviour's pathway. His baptism in Jordan was His public espousal of our cause, His identification with sinful men. His earliest teaching contains the significant statement, "the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away." Directly after Peter's confession of His Messiahship our Saviour takes elaborate pains to make plain to His disciples "that the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again." On the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah discourse with Him concerning the decease which He must accomplish at Jerusalem. A strange and gruesome topic in the midst of the heavenly splendour. Why mention the crown of thorns at the moment when His head was surrounded by a halo of glory? Why, as He stood between two of His choicest saints, should He be told that He will shortly hang between two malefactors? Why, when His countenance was shining as the sun, tell Him how spiteful men will spit upon it and buffet it? Why, when His raiment was radiant with splendour declare how those very garments should be parted and gambled over? Because they were details of the one decisive battle of the world. If Englishmen rejoiced over the forced march by which Kimberley was relieved, if schoolboys treasure every incident in some hotly contested football match or boat race, what wonder that these citizens of glory, knowing perfectly from the Scriptures how the great conflict which achieved

our Redemption would be waged, dwelt upon every detail of the Sacred Passion.

And the Gospels speak of the Cross not merely as inevitable but as indispensable. It is not that One the purity of whose teaching was so far above the level of His day could not escape the martyr's crown, it is that He came into the world and was announced to Israel as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world. "The Son of man must be lifted up," and the necessity sprang not from the antagonism between darkness and light which brings reproach and suffering upon every true witness for God, but from the divinely revealed fact that without shedding of blood there is no remission. The doctrine of the atonement is not an after invention of St. Paul to explain away the unpopularity of the Cross, it is the central pivot of the whole Jewish system and is prominent in our Lord's own teaching. He tells us that "the Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many," the idea of substitution being contained in the very word ransom, and He solemnly declared, "This is My blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The shedding of Christ's blood was not inevitable, Christ had power to defend Himself against all the malice of men, but it was indispensable. Christ could not save both Himself and us.

This is the central teaching of both the sacraments of the Gospel. Nothing is more primitive in Christianity than these. Before a page of the New Testament was written the mystical washing of water and the sacred supper of bread and wine were observed at Christ's bidding, and the whole significance of these simple ceremonies lies in the fact that Christ's blood was shed as an atonement for our sins.

And we preach Christ crucified because it is the only message that can do any good. Speaking of the blood of Christ, the hymn says—

Sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains,

and it is not poetic imagination but sober fact.

Let those be silent who have never felt the stains of guilt, who have lived their lives so far removed from the presence of God as never to feel the shame of the pollution which follows their sin. Those stains of guilt are real to consciences awakened by the light of heaven, and the removal of them is equally real and can be brought about in no other way than by faith in the precious blood of Christ. There is none of the joy of salvation, there is no newness of life, no power for victory except through reliance upon a crucified Saviour. "The regenerating power of forgiveness," to quote Professor Denney, "depends upon its cost, it is the knowledge that we have been bought with a price which makes us cease to be our own."

"Holiness comes from the assurance of a Divine Love which has gone deeper than all our sins and has taken on itself both the responsibility of our sins and the responsibility of delivering us from them." The sinner must have a certainty of "no condemnation," a sure knowledge of his being without reserve right with God through God's gracious act in Christ, before he can begin to live a new life.

"It is not by denying the Gospel that we can guard against the possible abuse of it." There is no virtue in faith except as it unites the soul to Christ. That union with Christ is the only guarantee that faith shall not prove dead and fruitless. Looked at from the outside, discussed in an academical spirit, God's way of forgiveness may seem dangerous and open to

serious abuse, but Christ knows how to use His own Gospel. "The faith which takes hold of Christ crucified conducts the healing and cleansing virtue of the atonement into the heart. God's mercy and love manifested at Calvary have deep in their very heart God's inexorable wrath and judgment against sin, such mercy and love, absolutely free as they are and able to awaken in sinful men a joy unspeakable and full of glory, can never foster laxity or presumption." But when the certainty of God's forgiveness is so qualified and disguised that men lose and almost suspect the lawfulness of the joy of salvation, then true religion has ceased to exist. Dr. Dale has pointed out that the absence of joy in Dr. Pusey's religious life was only the inevitable result of his conception of God's method of saving men; in parting with the doctrine of justification by faith only, he parted with the springs of gladness.

Our sense of sin must never become a burden which keeps us from entering into rest, it is our divinely appointed right to claim full and immediate deliverance by the blood of Christ. However many or great our sins, our relationship to God is unalterably fixed by the Cross of Jesus Christ. The greatest sinner in the world is a sinner for whom Christ died. The sins for which the believer seeks daily forgiveness do not annul his acceptance with God. The daily pardon and cleansing are but the daily virtue of that one all-embracing act of mercy in which, while we were yet sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. The Cross shelters every step of the Christian's pilgrimage, and the soul of the believer rests continually beneath its healing shadow.

God forbid then that we should cease to glory in the Cross. It is the one fact from which we draw all our assurance of forgiveness and all our power for

holiness, all our confidence in approaching God, and all our strength in overcoming the world. It is not the Mount of the Beatitudes but the "green hill far away, without a city wall," that we turn to for inspiration and courage.

Whatever the world may think or say we care not, we have no choice, it is the vision of the Cross that has saved us from the tyranny of sin and self. We must preach Christ crucified.

V

RISEN SAINTS

M

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.—COL. iii. 1-4.

Risen Saints

YOU see where the "if" comes in. It is not if Christ be risen. That, thank God, is certain fact. No unprejudiced person living in St. Paul's day could doubt it. The testimony of the disciples was so transparently genuine and real. The details of the story were so natural ; and the transformation in the Apostles was so manifest. The thing itself was so incredible and the means of disproof so simple that not a dozen people would have believed their testimony for a day, if it had not been true.

Think of it. By the Friday evening or Saturday morning all Jerusalem knew that Jesus had been crucified and His dead body placed in Joseph's tomb. By the Sunday evening it began to be whispered all over the city that the tomb was empty, and that while the Jews declared that the dead body had been stolen, the disciples affirmed that He was risen from the dead. A visit to the sepulchre made it perfectly certain that the body was gone. Where was it then ? Which story was true ? If the Jews' story was true and Christ was still dead, what easier than to find the dead body. Those bewildered disciples were certainly not equal to such a difficult task as the secretion of a dead body. The story of the Jewish priests was obviously false, and certainly

the after history of Christianity makes it impossible to believe that it was founded on a fraud. If, however, the disciples' story was true, and Christ had really risen the third day, then those who were witnesses to it would surely be powerfully influenced by so significant a fact. And so they were. A new power possessed these Galilean fishermen. Their joy and confidence and zeal and courage were manifest to all. All who heard the two stories and came into contact with the men themselves, saw at once that the Jews knew their story to be a fabrication, a lie, and that the disciples knew the testimony they had given was the truth. Christ was certainly risen and the disciples knew it. It was no question of doctrine to be argued about. It was a simple question of fact. The disciples gave their evidence with perfect assurance, and they backed it with their lives.

There is no if at this point. It is not if Christ be risen, but if ye be risen with Christ.

Are you then risen with Christ? Have you had an Easter in your own experience? You ought to be able to answer a glad "yes." St. Paul did not mean to imply any doubt about these Christians. In the twelfth verse of the second chapter of this Epistle he distinctly says, "Ye are risen with Him," and he appeals to their baptism as the pledge and sacrament of it. Brought up as either heathen or Jews they had been baptized as sincere believers in Jesus Christ. Their baptism was the seal of their union with Christ, a union brought about by the Holy Ghost Who alone had enabled them to repent and believe. It was not their baptism, but their faith in Christ which made them Christians, and they were baptized because they were Christians. It was not the Coronation that made Edward VII. King of England. Queen Victoria's death made him

lawful king and because he was our lawful king he was crowned.

But your baptism was not like theirs. You were baptized before you had shown any signs of repentance or faith, because your parents were Christians and certain sureties entered into solemn undertakings on your behalf. It is by no means certain therefore that you have received the inner part of Baptism. That inner part is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness. It is a partaking of the Death and Resurrection of Christ. The enjoyment of this spiritual counterpart depends upon faith. "Ye are risen with Him," writes St. Paul, "by faith in the operation of God who raised up Jesus from the dead."

But what if this faith be lacking? For this means something more than believing as a matter of history that Christ rose again the third day. The Roman watch believed that. The priests who bribed them believed that. A mere head faith, the assent to an historical fact, avails nothing.

St. Paul spoke about believing with the heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. What is it to believe with the heart? Facts have to do with the reason. The reasoning faculties must decide whether the evidence is sufficient or not. But this fact of the Resurrection of Christ affects the heart as well. For you have a personal interest in Christ.

He who died upon the Cross was the second Adam, your Federal Head, your representative and ransom. If you really believe that God raised Him from the dead then it follows that your sins, for which He died, are put away. So while your intellect accepts the evidence of the fact, the deep moving force of it lays hold upon your heart. The "fact" becomes a chief "factor" in your daily life. Your

faith is a mere pretence or makebelieve if it does not affect your whole heart and life. "Why," you are constrained to ask, "this one exception to the universal reign of death? why of all the millions that have died and been buried was this one man alone raised the third day to die no more?" You rightly answer, Because He was the sinless Son of God, and death could not hold Him. But if He was the sinless Son of God why did He perish like a common felon? Because He took the place of sinners and made atonement with His own blood for our sins. This is the meaning known to every Christian child of this wondrous Resurrection. Then, that being so, your faith in this fact cannot be a mere assent of the intellect, it must be a belief with the heart.

Such faith leads to momentous results. As soon as you with your heart believe in Christ you are identified with Him in His death. That is why you were baptized. Your baptism is your burial. As a believer in Christ you have died with Christ. As one who died with Christ you were buried in baptism. But having died with Christ you are also risen with Him. And this is not forensic fiction, but spiritual fact.

The moment you truly believe in Christ you become dead with Christ. Satan cannot condemn you any more, for you have suffered the full penalty of the law in the person of your representative Head. You have outlived yourself, you have outlived the guilt and the weakness of sinful self. You are dead. So by Christ's death your debt is paid and your bonds are cut. In His death you find the secret of deliverance from sin's allurements. Do not wait to feel free. Reckon yourself to be dead. The true believer is dead. Not dead in sin—that is the condition of the impenitent. Not "dead for sin"—Christ was that that we might never be it. But dead to

sin, blind to its attractions and deaf to its solicitations.

But you are also risen with Him. You have a share in His endless life. You have that life which is life indeed. As Ralph Erskine puts it: "When risen with Christ you have a Treasure, a Treasurer, and a Treasury. 'Your Life,' that is your Treasure; 'is hid with Christ'; He is your Treasurer, 'in God'—that is your Treasury. Your life is hidden for secrecy and for security. The world knoweth not the sons of God; they draw their strength and inspiration from a secret source, they fix their hopes upon things unseen. Their life is hidden from the eyes of men. This makes it all the more secure. The foundations are beyond the reach of pickaxe or dynamite. The believer's security does not lie exposed to the malice of man or devil. It is the security of a union which cannot be dissolved, of a trusteeship which never fails, of a covenant which cannot be broken. God the Father is the author of the Covenant. God the Son is the faithful guardian or trustee. God the Holy Ghost is the bond of the union. Secure indeed are those whose "life is hid with Christ in God."

What follows then? Risen with Christ we are free from condemnation, the bondage of sin is broken, we enter into fellowship with God, we have life from above, a hidden life secret and secure, what is to come of it? Shall we raise loud hallelujahs to God and then return with fresh zest to the pleasures of the world? Nay, nay. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." Seek them, not as an unattainable ideal, but as things now brought within your reach, to be possessed and enjoyed. Live where your life is. Find your joys in your native element. Your real life is not from beneath but from above. If you

would live your true life you must seek it where it is hidden in the heart of God. The world seeks its life in pleasure, in money making, in eating and drinking. Your life is in Christ. It is from Him your hunger and thirst will be satisfied, it is in Him you will find your richest treasure and your deepest joy. Seek the things which are above, even to be filled with all the fullness of God.

This is a most real and practical matter. What the Apostle is urging here is not "a golden reverie in which men escape from realities into the evening clouds and seek to take an opiate against earth's trials and temptations compounded of imaginations of heaven." St. Paul is dealing with strictly practical matters. He is opening out the secret of the sanctified life. He is showing how the abominable sins of the flesh which, with all our profession of Christianity no government dares to make criminal and which were thought nothing of in the old Pagan world, can be made to cease. He describes the familiar régime of all outward religion: "Touch not, taste not, handle not;" observe the new moon; fulfil the prescribed fasts; invoke your guardian angel—only to discover the whole as worthless, "not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." Then he unfolds the Christian way, the Cross with its message of death and release, the Resurrection with its gift of life and power, the living Christ to fill and overshadow the whole life, the "things which cannot be shaken," to which the believer is anchored by faith and hope and love, and sums up in one sentence the New Testament way of holiness which never fails: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." The man who really takes his place as "risen with Christ" can never be satisfied with any lower quest.

PART IV

Reflected in the Christian's Conduct

I

“NOT I, BUT CHRIST”

I am crucified with Christ : nevertheless I live : yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.—GAL. ii. 20.

“Not I, but Christ”

THE words come in the middle of a somewhat long verse, and the verse will be best understood if we read it clause by clause, beginning with the last one. It will teach us three fundamental lessons of the Christian life, and bring us into three distinct stages of Christian experience.

1.—“*He loved me and gave Himself for me.*”
CHRIST FOR ME.

2.—“*The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.*” CHRIST WITH ME.

3.—“*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*” CHRIST IN ME.

This is the divine order. We might as well try to teach Standard III. work to our infants as expect to understand the mystery of “Christ in us,” before we have learned the meaning of “Christ for us,” and “Christ with us.” It is all very well for our modern critics to ask for the Christian life and the Christian spirit without the Christian dogma, it is easy enough to say, “give us the Sermon on the Mount, that we will believe, but we cannot stand the Epistle to the Romans, and doctrines of Atonement and Justification and Regeneration,” it sounds very clever and is most taking, but it is a

shallow and foolish objection. "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." To admire the character of Jesus, or to seek to imitate His life is all in vain unless we first drink in His spirit and are made partakers of His nature. However much it may offend our pride, it is a plain fact that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and they who are in the flesh cannot please God." Culture and education can do a great deal to refine the outward conduct and to build up a character which in the eyes of the world shall be admirable and perfect, but nothing but the grace of God can implant that lowliness of mind and that pure love of God which alone make us like Christ. No amount of improving the old Adam nature will transform it into the likeness of Christ. We must be born again, born from above, born of God. The Holiness which all men admire, the true, genuine Holiness which we see in Jesus, and which God demands of all His children, cannot be attained to, nay, cannot be received, except upon the lines which God lays down.

This is the great difference between the Bible and all other religious books. A Japanese student once remarked to the present Bishop of Durham, "The Bible not only tells us what we ought to do, it goes on to explain how it may be done." This is so, and if God has revealed to us "how it may be done," it is sheer folly to assume that it can be done in any other way. Is it a mark of wisdom to admire the symmetry and strength of a building and yet find fault with the Architect's plan? Is it a mark of wisdom to admire the sweet fruit of the life of Christ, and then criticize the Divine method for grafting the same purity and love upon the wild stock of our corrupt natures?

Let us show our wisdom by believing that God knows more than we do, and that God's way of

making us holy is the best. He knows the depravity of our human nature. He does not flatter our vanity as so many of the false teachers of the present day. He knows what real holiness is, and gives no support to our many excuses for cherished and favourite sins. He understands the difficulties that surround us, the crafty opposition of the Devil, the subtle and incessant temptations of the world. God understands all the facts of the case, and we do not. Our pride blinds us to our own sinfulness. Our corruption gives us a distorted and altogether imperfect idea of true holiness. Our inexperience makes us ignorant of the Devil's malicious designs, and of the soul entangling snares of the world.

Take your place then as a humble learner in the school of Jesus, stand before the Cross of Calvary and learn the first lesson of the Christian life. "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

I.—CHRIST FOR ME.

The first step then in the Blessed Life is to grasp in some measure the great facts of the Incarnation and the Atonement, which form the foundation of our salvation and sonship. We must see "God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." We must learn how Christ came to

Be of sin the double cure,
Save from wrath and make us pure.

For us He was born in a manger that He might wear our nature, taste our sorrows and triumph over sin. For us He suffered on the Cross, both bearing the iniquity of us all and breaking the yoke of sin. For us He entered within the veil, our representative and our High Priest, our propitiation with the Father,

our sympathizing and ever watchful Intercessor.

As the ram caught in the thicket was offered in place of Isaac, so Christ was made sin for us though He knew no sin.

As the flood descended on the Ark but could not reach those hiding within, so the condemnation due to sin, God's holy wrath, fell upon Christ as He was nailed to the accursed tree, and cannot reach those who shelter by faith beneath the Cross of Jesus. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." "By the grace of God He tasted death for every man."

And deeper mystery, God teach it us aright, He not only bore our punishment but "He Himself bare our sins in His own body on the Tree." "He hath made Him to be sin for us." As the second Head of the human race, the representative man, He was identified in God's sight with the sin of the world. Yes, as the scape goat bore away, in figure, the sins of the Jewish nation confessed upon its head by the High Priest on the great Day of Atonement, so, in awful reality did God lay upon Jesus the iniquity of us all. So the first step in the Blessed Life is to take Christ not only as Pattern, Representative, and Ideal, but as Ransom, Propitiation, Sacrifice, and Scapegoat.

We must not wait for "some great thing" to do, some meritorious act which shall make us feel that we have at least done something in the work of our salvation, but simply like Naaman, "wash and be clean."

Hundreds would gladly do the great thing to make their own peace with God. If a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, or some particular penance, however painful and humiliating, would atone for sin, men

would gladly adopt it. Hundreds are doing this to-day both in heathen countries and wheresoever the pure Gospel is hidden behind the sacerdotal assumptions of Romish or Ritualistic teachers.

They do the "great thing" but they stumble at the simplicity of the preaching of the Cross. There is nothing to feed human pride in the teaching of salvation by faith only. Any thief in the county gaol, any poor harlot on the streets can be saved if salvation is only by believing in Jesus. This is the glory of God's redeeming love, but it gives the death blow to our pride. It places us all on one level. The captain of the host of Syria, the great man with his master, and honourable, stands on the same footing with the commonest Samaritan slave. He must abandon Abana and Pharpar, the noble rivers of Damascus, and bathe in the little river Jordan. He who would become like Christ must put aside all confidence in his intellectual supremacy and moral excellence, must strip off his garments of self-righteousness, his religious garb of zeal or orthodoxy, and as a helpless sinner he must "wash and be clean."

There must be a personal transaction with Christ, There must be the exercise of a personal appropriating faith. It is not enough to know that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." It is not enough to know that "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." We must in humble confidence appropriate our share in the finished work and say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me."

Christ, by virtue of His spotless life and atoning death, has become the High Priest and Physician of condemned and defiled mankind. He is charged to the full with the Divine energy which brings life and healing to lost souls. We love to sing it.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
 Grace to cover all my sin;
 Let the healing streams abound,
 Make and keep me pure within.

How is the pardoning, healing grace to be conducted from the Saviour to the sinner? What is the connecting link? Let there be no hesitation in our answer, "Faith is the connecting link." "He that believeth hath." Simple, childlike, personal, appropriating faith brings the needy sinner into contact with the Divine Saviour, and grace does its perfect work, pardoning and healing, justifying and sanctifying the soul. The sacraments of the Gospel, Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, do not necessarily impart grace to the soul. Their "wholesale operation" is only where they are "worthily" received. The sacraments are Divinely appointed helps to faith, to enable us to exercise faith more fully and definitely. The washing with water, the eating and drinking, are most helpful acts, by which the living faith may stretch out her hand and reach Christ. But unless faith is exercised, the sacraments are not "worthily" received, and so there is no blessing because there is no connexion with Christ.

When the woman with the issue of blood touched the Saviour's garment, she meant to steal away unobserved. She thought the Saviour was so charged with healing power that some of it would reach her diseased body even without His knowledge. But it was not so. The Saviour knew at once that virtue had gone out of Him. She thought in her ignorant faith that the virtue would come out of the garment and He know nothing about it. Not so, it came out of Him, out of His heart, out of His Divine and yet human nature. So He called her back to teach her this foundation truth that all blessing and healing come directly from Christ. All pardon of sin, all

cleansing of the heart is the direct act of Jesus ; the virtue comes only from Him. It was not the Saviour's garment that conveyed the healing to her body, but the woman's faith, the faith which had brought her in all her need and helplessness to Christ. It is not the absolution of the Minister, it is not the sacraments of the Gospel that convey the healing, but Christ imparts it directly to the soul. And faith establishes the connexion. Faith is the only channel of grace. So Jesus commended not the touching of His garment, but the faith which made her touch. "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." It was not the touch that saved her, but the faith in the touch. The multitude touched Him on every side, but they got no blessing, for they exercised no faith. It is faith in Christ which saves.

Faith may be expressed in a Look. "Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth." Faith may be expressed in a Cry. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Faith may be exercised in just Hearing. "Hear and your soul shall live." "He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life."

But the beginning of all true religion is to say from the heart, conscious of personal sinfulness and utter helplessness, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He took my place, the place of condemnation, that I might take the place of an adopted child in the family of God. He bore my burden that I might wear His easy yoke. He paid the ransom that I might go free. And when this lesson is learnt we pass from death unto life, we are at peace with God, we know that, unworthy as we are, "God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." Then, and not till then, the life of holiness is possible.

2.—CHRIST WITH ME

The second lesson God teaches us is "to live by faith in the Son of God." It is not enough to be saved through faith, we must live every hour of every day by faith. Not only are we justified by faith in the first instance, but after that, "The just shall live by faith." We must learn to know Christ with us in daily life as well as "Christ for us." We must learn the lesson of the empty tomb. We must drink in the promise of the ascending Saviour, "Lo, I am with you all the days." The perpetual presence of Christ must become a reality to us. We must learn to make use (if the phrase may be reverently allowed) of the ever-present Saviour. He who died to save, lives to keep.

But for this blessed truth we should be afraid to stand before the awful Cross. For that Cross is as eloquent in its demand upon our obedience and love as it is in proclaiming our peace with God. No man can stand before the Cross and accept the peace there made without having his whole soul thrilled with the command, "Go, and sin no more." Nothing does more to keep anxious souls from venturing their confidence upon the finished work than the fear that they will prove faithless afterwards. "I couldn't keep to it," is the excuse with which thousands put away from them the Gospel offer of free salvation. How essential then to learn the practical value of the presence of Christ. That if "reconciled to God by the death of His Son much more shall we be saved in His life." That when saved by His grace from the penalty of sins, we shall be "kept in the power of God through faith," unto that final salvation from its presence and surroundings which is "nearer" to us "than when we believed."

David said, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling?" There is sound logic in the prayer. God has already done the greater, will He not do the less? "Christ for us" is our deliverance from death, shall not "Christ with us" be our deliverance from falling? Oh for the restful confidence of this appeal, "Wilt not Thou?" It is not the earnestness of despair which is so often prominent in our daily prayers for deliverance. It is the quiet faith that not only seeks but rests.

Christ taught us to finish our prayers with a "for," with a strong argument which drives away all doubt, and inspires full confidence. We are to pray, "Deliver us from evil, *for* Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory." Too many of God's people finish with a "*but*"—"but I am so weak, my temptations are so strong, my faith is so feeble." Yes, we pray, "Wilt not *Thou* deliver?" but our eyes are too often upon our own strength, our own wisdom, our own faith to see if we can deliver ourselves.

Christ will not help you to keep yourself. He will keep you entirely, always. It is not a question of your strength, but of His might. A little child inside an impregnable fortress is just as safe as a strong man. It's the strength of the fortress which makes the little one safe.

It is the watchfulness of the ever-present Saviour, the Keeper of Israel Who never slumbers nor sleeps, which secures our safety. Read Psalm cxxi, the "keeping psalm," as it is called, so full of that precious truth which has transformed the lives of so many, viz.: the Lord Himself is our Keeper. "Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills?" the psalmist asks. No, indeed, faith looks above the hills to Him that dwelleth in the heavens. As the heavens are higher than the hills, so is our God stronger and

more than sufficient for all our difficulties. The word difficult is a relative term. What is difficult for a child is easy for a strong man. What is difficult to half-a-dozen strong men becomes quite easy when steam power is applied. As the power is increased the difficulty or strain diminishes. If we will only live upon the power of Christ the difficulties in our lives will disappear. When we are "strengthened with all might," then shall we manifest "all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." We must look above and beyond the hills of difficulty to Him who dwelleth in the heavens. We must not compare our difficulties with our own troubles, but with Christ. Our help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He can open the windows of heaven to supply our need. He can open a path through the Red Sea to deliver us from our fear. Yea, the angel-host of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him to deliver them. All we want is the eye of faith to see the Divine protection. Daniel triumphed in Babylon "because he believed in his God." If we had Daniel's faith it would be easy enough to show his courage and decision. But we hear the roar of the lions and we do not hear the "Fear not" of the Keeping Christ. We see the malicious designs of our enemies, we do not see the angel of the Lord ready to shut the lion's mouth. Oh to live by faith in the Living God! To remember that He who says to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou come and no further," is the supreme controller of all things. That without His knowledge not a hair of our heads can fall to the ground. To the man of the world the hungry lions, the ridicule, hatred, and opposition of ungodly men are very terrible realities; angels seem nowhere in comparison with lions, but to the man of faith every lion is chained and muzzled, because God, Who made heaven and earth, ruleth over all.

And God Himself is our Keeper. "He will not suffer our feet to be moved." It is a *restful* keeping. "The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." Yes, we can sit down under His shadow with great delight. Christ comes between us and the burden and heat of the day. We can rest in the midst of the conflict, for "He spreads a table for us even in the presence of our foes."

It is a *thorough* keeping. "The Lord shall keep thee from *all* evil." He will sanctify us wholly, so that our whole spirit and soul and body shall be kept blameless. In our threefold human life, in all the relations of spirit, soul, and body we shall be kept. In the intercourse of our spirits with God we shall be kept humble and submissive and trusting. We shall be kept from the secret and heart sins of pride, and doubt, and presumption, which are so fatal to our communion with Christ. In our soul intercourse with the world, with the pride of intellect, with the pleasures of daily life, we shall be kept unspotted. And our bodies as well, in the countless temptations which assail us through the avenues of the senses, in those temptations which are so strong because of the frailty of our human nature, and the corruption of the flesh within, from the sins of sloth and irritability, of negligence and selfishness and anger, and from all the sinful lusts of the flesh, we shall be kept. The Lord shall keep thee from all evil, from evil without and evil within. From evil thoughts and wrong motives, and a hard and proud spirit, as well as from definite sins of commission and omission.

It is a *practical* keeping, a keeping for indoors and outdoors as well. The going out into business, or society, or work for God, the coming in to the home circle where sometimes we most easily yield because most off our guard, both are under His care.

"The Lord shall keep thy going out and thy coming in." And it is a *present* and *perpetual* keeping. "From this time forth, and for evermore." Let us mark it in our Bibles and rest upon it, "*from this time forth*," however many the failures of the past, however terrible the difficulties of the future, however great the weakness and insufficiency of the present, God Himself is our Keeper from this time forth and without any break for evermore.

Learn then to commit the keeping of your soul into the hands of Christ. He is able to keep that which you commit to Him. But let the committing be a reality. Don't give yourself over and then draw yourself back. Leave yourself in His care. Like St. Peter, abandon your own boat and trust yourself to the upholding power of Christ. Don't put one foot over the bulwarks to see if the water will bear, but in the reckless abandonment of Faith leap over the side and commit yourself to the treacherous waves, knowing that while you rest upon His Word they shall be a rock beneath your feet.

And after the committing there must be the trusting. After the surrender comes the Faith that works. Reckon upon God knowing that His word cannot fail. Look, not at the waves, but at Christ Who bids you walk upon the water, and reckon that He not only can but does uphold you.

Remember that the responsibility of keeping you is with Christ, the responsibility of trusting Him to keep you is yours. The question is not "Are ye able," but "Believe ye that I am able?" Learn then to be occupied with Christ. Don't watch the sin but watch the Saviour. Some sins have a strong power of fascinating us, the more we think of them the more we are drawn to them. Don't stay to fight in your own strength, but flee unto the keeping of Christ. Yea, rather abide in Him always, that when

the enemy comes he may find you in the Fortress. You may have no time to escape if the temptation reaches you unhidden. Your faith must be in exercise before the enemy comes or it may be too slow in action in the hour of conflict. St. Paul prayed that he might "be found in Him." Even so let every temptation, every trial, every difficulty find you in Him, your Fortress and your Treasury. Live then by faith, let your heart be ever dwelling upon His promise, look up continually to Christ, and pray, "Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation." Let your faith rest, not upon some past experience of five or ten years ago, but on the manifestation of Christ to your soul that very day, His word to you in your daily portion, your sight and touch of Him in your own secret chamber.

Thus we live by faith in the Son of God. Christ with us in the hour of temptation our shield and hiding place. Christ with us in the valley of the shadow our comfort and support. Christ with us "when other helpers fail and comforts flee." Christ with us when our way is hid in darkness, and we know not why all things are against us. Then we walk by faith, we trust in the Lord and stay upon our God. Then though we do not *realize* His presence we believe that He is there; we rest on His promise when all seems against us and know it cannot fail. We walk not by sight or by feeling, but by faith. Christ is the environment of our whole life. Between us and the evil world, with its vulgar ridicule or polished sneer, its malicious persecutions or its dangerous flattery; between us and the disappointments, the sufferings, the sorrows, the anxieties of daily life; between us and the rush of this busy age, the all-absorbing and too often faith destroying claims of business, the worrying and disheartening difficulties of our work for God; between

us and the fierce temptations of the flesh within and the Devil without there stands, always watchful, always sympathizing, and always kind, our patient Saviour; "Fear thou not," He says, "for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness." So we gladly sing: "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." "I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

3.—CHRIST IN ME.

Then will come the third lesson, as "Christ with us" becomes a closer and more constant reality it deepens into the greater mystery, "It is no longer I that live but Christ liveth in me." He is not only the environment of our life, Shield, Fortress, Treasurer, Guide, but He is our life itself, the indwelling source of love and purity, of wisdom and courage.

Now this is spoken of in Holy Scripture as a definite and distinct experience. "The water that I shall give him shall *become* in him a well of water" is the Saviour's promise. Too many Christians are like the widow with nothing in the house but a pot of oil. They are in debt and subject to slavery through the death of the first husband, the total collapse of the religion of self-effort. But though they have asked and received the gift of the Holy Ghost, they have not learned to bring their empty vessels to the Divine Fullness. Their spiritual life is far from being like the springing up of a well within. It is characterized more by strain and scarcity and staleness, than by the spontaneity and abundance and freshness of a perpetual spring. They certainly have no experience of rivers of living

water flowing out from them to all around. They cannot say, "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." Although they accept the Lord as the portion of their cup, their cup is only half full, and they have no overflowing blessing to give to a thirsty world.

Not all Christians then have learnt the meaning of Christ in us. It belongs to the fathers in Christ more than to the little children. It is not the blade that first springs from the good seed, it is the full corn in the ear. It is not the wilderness experience of wandering and unrest and desert fare through unbelief, it is the fulness of blessing, the land of rest and victory flowing with milk and honey to which those who fully believe and follow with a whole heart shall enter in.

St. Paul clearly makes it (a matter of definite experience after the first knowledge of Christ when he prays for it on behalf of the Church at Ephesus. The petition "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" is based upon the petition "That according to the riches of His glory, God would grant them to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." Thus the strengthening work of the Holy Spirit, His confirming us in faith and love, is to lead up to the definite experience of an indwelling Christ. An ungrieved Holy Spirit is to work mightily until there shall be nothing in us contrary to the Saviour's will, so that our obedient hearts may be a pleasant abiding place for the Holy Christ.)

In John xiv. 24, our blessed Lord makes obedience the condition of His indwelling. "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." This verse might well make us despair of ever knowing the blessing of an indwelling Christ were it not for the prayer in Ephesians iii. 16.

How can we love Christ and keep His words ? Only as we are "strengthened with might by His Spirit." The love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the desire to obey must be worked in us first by God and then as we yield freely the obedience of love Christ will come to us and take up His abode in our hearts. First comes the Love and then the living Christ. "I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it ; that the Love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

But there is another condition. Christ is to dwell in our hearts by *faith*. There must be the constant exercise of faith if this blessing is to be enjoyed without intermission.

This is put in very forcible language in John vi. 57. Our Lord there says, "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." We remember our Lord's words, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world." They make the parallel of John vi. 57 all the more solemn. Because Christ was sent by the Father He lived by the Father. Because we are sent by Christ we must live by Christ. If we would live by Christ in the fullest sense we must "eat" (marvellous condescension of the Divine Teacher to use such simple homely language), we must "eat," "feed upon" Christ. In what sense did Christ live by the Father ? Through the mystery of the indwelling of the Father in the Son. "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." "I can of Mine own self do nothing ; I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." Christ had "emptied Himself," would not live upon His own resources. He lived upon His Father. His will was not absorbed in but subordinated to the

Father's will. His own wisdom and strength were laid aside that He might receive all from the Father. "As I hear, I judge." "He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learner."

Even so, putting aside our own will, our own resources of strength and wisdom, we must live by Christ. He is to be the source within of all our activities, the spring of every thought and wish, the guiding and controlling power over every word and deed. And this is to be not from any influence received from Him so as to be apart from Him, but by His own indwelling presence in our hearts. It is not figurative language that describes Christ as dwelling in our hearts. It does not mean only that His words are in our memory, His example calls forth our admiration, that we are influenced by gratitude for His goodness, by love to His Person. Figuratively we can of course say that the absent boy is in his mother's heart, and that all great men have lived, by their teaching and influence, in the hearts of those who knew them, but it would be an insult to the plain and repeated statements of the Lord Jesus, and St. Paul, to limit these words to this figurative meaning. In all solemnity Christ said, "Abide in Me and I in you." As the life of the vine is in every branch, so is the living Christ in our hearts, personally powerfully and consciously. "For at that day ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in Me and I in you." In sober prose and not fanciful poetry, St. Paul states as his experience, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

And "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." The feeding upon Christ is another condition for our living by Christ, for Christ living in us. Let us remember this as we draw near to the Lord's table Sunday by Sunday. It is certainly possible to feed upon Christ by His Word alone, but none

who desire earnestly to live by Christ should neglect the feeding upon Him in their hearts by faith in the Holy Communion that He has left us. Thus by eating and drinking as He has commanded us we may touch with our faith the great Physician, and virtue both to heal and to strengthen will flow into our souls.

But the feeding upon Christ must be a perpetual act. The Lord's Supper with our fellow Christians can only be on special occasions. The promise, "I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me," may be fulfilled in us always. Feeding means appropriating and making our own. The food we eat becomes part of our physical being and goes to make up the tissues of the brain and muscle, and bone and nerve. So must we hourly be receiving Christ, appropriating Him as our Saviour, drawing upon Him for all that we need.

One further condition is supplied to us in our Motto-text. Before we can say with truth Christ liveth in me, we must be able to say, "I am crucified with Christ." This is something more than "Christ was crucified for me." It means that we have become one with Christ in our attitude towards God and towards the world and sin. The Cross came to our blessed Lord as the Father's will. His perfect submission to the Father's will brought Him to the Cross. It came to Him also as the expression of the world's hatred and rejection, the consequence of His fearless exposure and denunciation of all unrighteousness and sin. So for us to be crucified with Christ means that we are one with Him in perfect submission to God's will, in complete separation from the ungodly, and in open and unceasing opposition to all that is sinful and wrong. It means the death-blow to our self-seeking, our worldliness, and our sinful lusts; it means the slaying of that "secret

sympathy with sin " which lingers so long and hides away so skilfully in our hearts. We which are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. We glory in the Cross, "whereby the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world." In this sense "we rise on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things." The self-life with all its little weaknesses and small ambitions and petty jealousies is completely abandoned. We become one with Christ in His magnificent self-sacrifice for a lost and needy world. Not caring to find our life we are glad to lose it for Christ's sake and the Gospel's. We are content as the corn of wheat to "fall into the ground and die," that we may bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

This is the Blessed Life, the life of Christ. The life that is entered through death, sustained by faith, and cheered by love. We enter it through death, as self-will dies at the Cross of Calvary and we are crucified with Christ. We are sustained in it by faith, we walk by faith not by sight, "we live by the faith of the Son of God." We are cheered in it by Love, for as sweet music ever sounding in our hearts, as bright sunshine ever gladdening our path, we say over to ourselves and testify to the whole world, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." "CHRIST FOR US."—Our bulwark against condemnation and the guilt of sin. "CHRIST WITH US."—Our Guide and Friend and Keeper in the battle of life without. "CHRIST IN US."—Our never-failing source of Love and Purity and Strength within.

II

WHO ARE THE SONS OF GOD ?

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name, which were born . . . of God.—JOHN i. 12, 13.

Who are the Sons of God ?

YOU see, then, who are the Sons of God. Not all mankind. Not all who profess and call themselves Christians, but those who are born of God, as many as have received Christ and have believed in His name.

But this is a narrower Gospel than that which we hear to-day. The Fatherhood of God is so proclaimed that all men, whatever their character and conduct, are encouraged to call themselves Sons of God. It is argued with beautiful simplicity that since God is the Father of all mankind, all mankind, without any condition or exception, are children of God, so that sonship in the Family of God is the natural inheritance of the whole human race.

This may appear to some a grand and noble doctrine. It may seem a beautiful and inspiring Gospel to declare that all men are sons of God, and have only to realize and live up to their calling. It has been the favourite tenet of some Christian circles for the last quarter of a century. But it is not the truth of Holy Scripture, it is not the Gospel of Christ.

This verse limits sonship to those who have received Christ and are born of God. So St. Paul writes to the Galatians : " Ye are all (Jew and Gentile alike) children of God." How ? By reason of your common humanity ? No. " By faith in

Christ Jesus." So where there is no faith in Christ Jesus, men are not children of God.

So St. James teaches: "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." And St. Peter: "Being born again . . . by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

These are not isolated passages. This is the trend of all Scripture. There is a difference between the righteous and the wicked, a difference between those who are born of God and those who are born only of blood and of the will of the flesh, a difference between the sons of God and the world. The sons of God are to shine "as lights in the world." They were darkness, but now are they "light in the Lord." The sons of God are not the whole human family: they are as separate from the rest of mankind as darkness from light, as righteousness from unrighteousness, as Christ from Belial.

What, then, becomes of the Fatherhood of God? It remains just as revealed by Scripture. Scripture reveals a love which goes out to all mankind, which makes provision for the redemption of the whole race, which, with outstretched arms, invites all the weary, the thirsty, the sad, to come and rest and drink, and be of good cheer. Yes, the Fatherhood of God is the foundation of our redemption. God loved the world. God will have all men to be saved. God is love. God stands towards mankind as a loving Father.

But if you argue from this that all men have a right to call themselves His sons, without any qualifying condition, you argue in the teeth of all Scripture.

It is no use saying that the analogy suggests it. Every argument from analogy needs to be verified by Scripture. A correspondence in one or two points

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is sufficient to justify the analogy, which yet may not hold good in every point. For example, every son expects to grow up until, in the course of time, he may become his father's equal in physical strength, in intellectual vigour, and in moral character. Shall we press the analogy and say, if we are really sons of God we shall in course of time become as wise and powerful as God, and that if we can never expect to be equal to God we are not really His sons ? So we must not press the analogy, that because God has a Father's love towards all men, therefore all men are sons of God. For Scripture declares that the sacred relationship of being a son of God belongs only to those who are born of God.

Sonship implies a sharing of the Life of God. But what is the Life of God which, if we are God's sons, we must share ?

There is a sense in which all men share the Life of God. We are all created in His image after His likeness. We are immortal, we are free, we are moral and reasonable beings. But when we think of God we think not of His immortality and freedom and intelligence, but of His supreme goodness. The glory of God is His goodness. Yea, the very essence of God is His goodness. You and I can become evil and false and selfish and impure without ceasing to be men. God cannot become evil or untrue or selfish or impure without ceasing to be God. Now, because God is the Father of all mankind, He wants all men to share that goodness which is the very essence of His nature. When we are born of God we begin to share the goodness of God : then we become partakers of the Divine Nature. Then, and not till then, we become sons of God.

If we had not been created in the image of God, it would not have been possible for us to be born of

God. Our natural birth makes it possible for us to become the subjects of this supernatural and Divine birth. So in every man there is the possibility of becoming a son of God ; but only those who are born of God are really sons of God, for only these share that moral perfection which is the very essence of the Nature of God.

To teach, then, that all men are sons of God is to pervert the truth of Holy Scripture and to propagate an error fraught with most mischievous results. If the drunkard is a son of God as much as the sober man, if the liar is a son of God as much as the truthful man, if the unchaste, the vindictive, the selfish, the grasping, are sons of God, as much as the chaste, the kind, the unselfish, the self-sacrificing, then good and evil, heaven and hell, God and Satan are all one. Such teaching acts as an opiate to the awakened conscience, for the wicked say, " If I am a son of God, I cannot be very far wrong, however I have sinned." Such teaching turns the edge of all the solemn warnings against the ungodly, for how can a son of God be left to the worm that never dies and the fire that is not quenched ? Yes, but if you are not a son of God, if by your stubborn unbelief you have made the grace of God of none effect, if while God acted towards you as a Father you have spurned His love and failed to qualify, on God's terms, to become His son, choosing rather to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season than to be called the son of the Most High, what then ? God cannot be more of a Father to you than He was at Calvary. God cannot do more for you than He did then, when He spared not His only Son. God cannot hold out any greater inducement than when He proposes that you should become His sons and daughters by faith in Christ Jesus. If you will not accept Christ, if you will not yield to the striving

of God's Spirit, if you will not become a son of God by faith in Christ Jesus, how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation ?

But you may become sons of God. "Children of wrath," as we all are by nature, we can all be made "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Do you ask how ? "As many as received Him" : this is the crucial point. The reception of Christ is the turning point of salvation.

This is something more than a general acceptance of Christianity. It is quite possible to be a professing Christian and yet not to have accepted Christ. This we might gather from the context : "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." His own were the Jews. They were very religious. They were very proud of their position as descendants of Abraham and children of God by circumcision. But these Jews received Him not. And when they came to Christ and said, "We have one Father, even God," Christ said to them, "If God were your Father, ye would love Me." And then He added the solemn words : "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." Christ utterly repudiated the idea that sonship is a matter of mere covenant relationship secured by circumcision or any religious ordinance. Sonship is a matter of heart relationship to God. That relationship is fixed by the receiving or rejecting of Jesus Christ. And experience has shown that what was true at one particular time of these religious Jews has been true at all other times of many professing Christians. To His own, the baptized members of His Church, Jesus comes, knocking at the door of the heart, asking for the surrender of heart and life, and His own, those who call Him Lord, receive Him not. This receiving of Christ is something more, then, than being baptized and accepting Christianity.

It is accepting Him, not His doctrines or His sacraments alone, but Himself. Jesus Christ is God's supreme gift to men. If we receive Him, we receive pardon and life and salvation and everything with Him; but if we do not receive Him, then we receive nothing at all. True faith is shown not in receiving pardon, but in receiving Christ. Receive Christ, come before God in Christ, and all heaven's bounty is yours. Refuse Christ, come before God with any other plea, and heaven's gates are barred against you.

Surely this is simple enough. To receive Christ is to believe on His Name. It is to believe Him to be all that God calls Him: to trust Him as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," as "the Bread of God which giveth life unto the world," as "the Captain of our salvation," as the "Good Shepherd of the sheep," as the "Prince of Peace." It means to accept Him for all the purposes for which God has given Him with all the faculties with which God has endowed you. It means that your conscience accepts Him as your Priest and Sacrifice, your understanding accepts Him as your Prophet, your heart accepts Him as your Master and King. This is the one point on which your sonship and salvation depend. Do you from the heart believe Jesus Christ to be all that God says He is? Do you from your heart accept Him to do for you all that God has appointed Him to do? God has given Jesus Christ. Herein He proves Himself the Father of all mankind. Accept Jesus Christ as God's gift to you, and you become His son.

But you must accept Jesus Christ as the free gift of God. Some seem to receive God's favour as if it were their right. They do not often put their thoughts into words; but instead of looking upon

Christ as the gift of God's love, to be accepted humbly and thankfully, ascribing all the glory of our salvation to the grace of God, they think that God ought to forgive sinners, they consider that in exercising mercy and loving kindness God is only making just allowance for human frailty, they conclude that our sin is more our misfortune than our fault, and that in accepting God's forgiveness we are receiving what is only our due. Thus the grace of God is neither recognized nor acknowledged, and the sinner, while accepting a free pardon, looks upon himself as on almost equal terms with God.

This is not accepting Christ. If you want pardon, you must accept Christ. You must acknowledge that you have forfeited God's favour and provoked His holy and righteous wrath. You must confess that you have no right whatever to mercy, but that God of His free tender love towards mankind gave His only Son to suffer death for our redemption. This gift you by faith accept. You accept His death on the cross as the one oblation and satisfaction for your sins. You accept Christ as your personal Saviour, knowing that you cannot save yourself, and that you have no right to expect anything from God apart from His gift of Jesus Christ. And the moment you thus accept Christ you have the right to become a son of God. In accepting Christ you take your place in the Family of God as an adopted and accepted child. Have you thus accepted Christ ? You say, "I mean to do so, but I cannot just yet. I have so many difficulties, such hindrances in my circumstances, in my home, in my business." That is not strictly true ; there is only one real difficulty. If your own heart were right, everything else would come right, You say, "Yes, it is so. I want to be saved, but my evil heart is always pulling me back." No, dear friend. You do

not want to be saved. There are rival guests in the heart, and so you keep Christ outside. Please do not think of your heart as something which acts independently and against your inclinations. It is your inclinations which are wrong. Just as the Jews loved the praise of men, loved their own good opinion of themselves, and hated the light, so there is a secret love of self and sin which keeps you from accepting Christ. But put that away, I pray you, at once, To be a son of God is the highest honour that men can enjoy. God offers you sonship, salvation, eternal life with Christ. Submit to Jesus Christ. Accept Him as your present Saviour. Do it now. New peace and joy will fill your heart. Fresh strength and courage, new rest and victory, will come into your life. God's Holy Spirit will witness with your spirit that you are a son of God. The world will not know you, but you will know that you belong to Heaven and that you are born of God.

III

STRAIGHT PATHS

And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way (R.V. Marginal Reading: "Put out of joint") ; but let it rather be healed.—HEB. xii. 13.

Straight Paths

I WONDER if we have all learned the importance of straight or even paths. Living here in England, with good roads and asphalt pavements, we hardly realize their value until, perhaps, the laying down of telephone wires or electric trams leads to a most inconvenient obstruction. But in mountain districts it is very different. The accessibility of any place in the High Alps depends chiefly upon the state of the path. If there is any clear path, though it is only a sheep track on the mountain side, we can make our way with ease, putting down one foot after the other, and stepping out with confidence. But if the path is destroyed, if some avalanche has swept it away, leaving nothing but great blocks of stones or a mass of loose rubble, our progress is difficult and tedious. Instead of walking, we have to scramble or climb, and are fortunate if we escape all slips and stumbles. Even at the seaside it is generally quicker to follow the pathway by the side of the cliff, however deviating, rather than to attempt to make our way along the beach or yielding sand. A good path is essential to comfortable walking.

And a straight or even path is all the more important in the case of those who are lame or liable to twist the ankle or put the knee out of joint.

Steady walking along a good path only strengthens the ankle joint, but the jolting of a broken track will often lead to dislocation. There is plain common sense which any mountaineer will endorse in the inspired command, "Make straight paths for your feet that that which is lame be not put out of joint."

For the best of men are but men at the best, and are easily put out of joint. However deep and thorough the work of regeneration, our spiritual life is never so firmly established as to be beyond the possibility of any dislocation or unhinging. We enter the world indeed absolutely and hopelessly crippled by the Fall. The discord in our nature is so deep, the conflict between duty and inclination, between reason and appetite, between conscience and convenience, is so sharp and severe that until we are born again it is impossible for us to pursue the upward way. Instead of loving God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves, we love ourselves with all our might and hate any one, whether our neighbour or our Maker, who interferes with us or opposes us. Only by a definite work of Divine Grace can our souls be so rebuilt and restored as to be able to love God supremely, to hold the faith sincerely and to follow holiness successfully. No education or religious training can free us from the necessity of the New Birth. "Those who are in the flesh," those whose aspirations and endeavours are not inspired and sustained by God the Holy Ghost, "cannot please God." While dealing with "healing" for those who are "in the way," it must never be forgotten that those who are not "born again" are out of the way altogether. They need not healing but quickening, not strength and guidance but a new birth.

Even those who are truly born of God are liable to be put out of joint. Elijah's flight at Jezebel's threat shows plainly that the most strong and courageous faith is never very far removed from timorous unbelief. The awful fall of David, the man after God's own heart, is sad evidence that the most spiritually minded may in an unguarded hour be overcome by the very vilest sins. It is a matter of common experience, alas ! that the most meek and self-controlled will sometimes break out into a perfect volcano of irritability under sudden provocation. No wonder then that the Apostle, knowing that a broken path will often throw a loose limb out of joint, urges us if we want to keep our spiritual life whole and well adjusted to make straight or even paths for our feet.

Of course we cannot avoid all obstructions. This is implied in the exhortation at the beginning of this twelfth chapter, "Let us run with patience the race set before us." The word patience is really "endurance." It is through endurance that we run. Our progress, therefore, is measured not by the distance covered but by the resistance overcome. And to show that even worse difficulties were before them, the Apostle adds : "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin !" They had endured already much social and religious ostracism with considerable financial loss, but it had not yet come to stripes and death. Endurance then is always needed. There is no carpeted path to heaven. The race set before us is not generally along a smooth path. "The evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us" do not always come to nought. At any turn of the road the path which has seemed so plain and straight may all at once be filled with pitfalls and stumbling-blocks.

There is no need to dwell upon these inevitable obstacles and roughnesses. They are due to many causes. The reckless competition of our day makes it peculiarly hard for some to earn their daily bread. Faith in a loving Providence and good-will towards men are often put out of joint in this way. The man who is determined to be rich cannot make straight paths for his feet. Then stumbling-blocks often arise from the inconsistencies of professing Christians, perhaps through the fickleness and unkindness of trusted friends. Sometimes there is the pressure of ill health and adverse circumstances. There are also the open attacks of the sceptic, the insidious blandishments of superstition and false doctrine, and above and behind all the skilfully planned solicitations of one who has had six thousand years' experience of seducing sinful men. So we cannot avoid all rough places. The most sheltered home life and the most careful training in godliness cannot so inoculate us as to render us proof against the poison of doubt and the uprisings of anger and uncleanness.

But while we cannot wholly avoid temptation, we can do a great deal to keep out of its way and to lessen its influence over us. We can make straight paths for our feet. We can avoid those things which would dislocate our spiritual life.

Whenever we are called upon to make any choice, whether of the church in which we worship or of the house in which we dwell or of the occupation by which we earn our daily bread; in the books we read, the recreations we take part in, the friends we associate with, in the spending of our time and money, down to our eating and drinking and dress, we can make straight paths for our feet. If your attire is wanton and your eating and drinking intemperate, if you attend places of amusement

where lewdness and indecency abound, if you read books which are calculated to destroy faith and purity, if the friends you associate with are too fast to fear God or too loose in their views to follow the Bible, if you build your house where there is no Gospel ministry near or choose an employment in which you cannot glorify God or hallow His Sabbath or if you play games which are wholly given up to gambling, you are making provision for the flesh, you are not making straight paths for your feet, you are running the risk of serious spiritual dislocation.

The Puritanism and Protestantism which are inseparable in the present day from true religion are the direct result of obedience to this inspired command. We are sometimes charged with adding to the ten commandments. We cannot help ourselves. So far as our own conduct is concerned we are obliged to add to them if we would follow Christ. We are careful not to judge our neighbour, we have no right and no wish to do so. But we must have our own paths made even and smooth. We will, if possible, by unsparing use of the steam roller of God's Word clear of all obstacles a plain and well marked out path by which we can run in the way of God's commandments. Seeing how many stumble over the drinking habits of the day, we will make for our own feet the safest of all paths, the path of total abstinence. Knowing how card-playing has led thousands to destruction, we prefer to remain in ignorance of the mysteries of whist and bridge, or, at any rate, will refuse to play even for farthing points. Knowing how easily faith is weakened we will give all available time to the wholesome teaching of the Bible, and avoid infidel and semi-infidel literature as we should avoid poison. Seeing how quickly faith degenerates into super-

stition, and worship into idolatry, we will avoid so-called High Celebrations, and never allow ourselves to be present as a worshipper at the Holy Communion without eating and drinking as He told us, assured that any aid to devotion which rests upon disobedience of His command must, however innocent it may seem, be injurious to our spiritual life.

And if all these precautions seem to amount to a confession of weakness, we will bear the reproach of being weak. Who, indeed, is not weak? Who is so safe against all danger of being put out of joint that he can afford to play with infidelity or superstition, with impurity or the gambling fever? Let those who dare boast of their strength; they forget the weakness of sinful flesh, the strength of our skilled adversary, and the corruption that is in the world through lust.

We will remember, too, as a secondary motive, that in whatever point we think ourselves quite strong and safe, in that very point some of those who are nearest to us are most weak. For the sake of the lame brother who is following us we must pick out a straight path.

But this thought must be kept strictly as a secondary motive. We must beware of that subtle form of deadly pride which does good only for the sake of example. Of course, the fact that no man liveth to himself, that we cannot, therefore, follow a wrong course without influencing others to do the same, adds to the mischievousness of sin; but the man who does right mainly in order to set a good example is really doing very wrong. There are such, however. Sometimes the country squire goes to church to set an example to his tenants, and when he is in London he goes to a Sunday concert instead. Has he not the sense to see that any action which

does not spring from the highest motive is not really a good example? If you do not serve God in order to please God, you are only mocking Him. It is quite possible for a certain amount of outward religious observance to be a cloak for rank infidelity. It is so when men pretend that there is no need for them to keep the Sabbath, or study the Bible, or pray to God; but that as these things are useful for the unthinking crowd, they practise them in order to set a good example. No, every man must make straight paths for his own feet. When God the Holy Ghost, with a light that penetrates deeper than any Röntgen rays, discovers to you your true state, as God sees you, so that you see plainly your depravity, your weakness, your tendency to spiritual dislocation, you will abandon that insolent assertion of superiority which makes you do good for the sake of example, and you will give your mind to such a rectification of your daily conduct, such a renouncing of worldly ambitions and carnal delights, as will enable you to make straight paths for your feet. Then you will carefully study God's Word, you will jealously keep God's Sabbath, and you will diligently attend public worship and the reading and expounding of God's Word for your own soul's sake, that in spite of your tendency to lameness you may not be put out of joint.

But there is healing, thank God, for all those who are out of joint. "Let it rather be healed," the verse runs, "not put out of joint, but rather healed," as the Revised Version has it.

There is the healing and strengthening effect of daily exercise. As you daily fulfil your appointed task, as you bear up bravely against the hardships of life, as you steadily overcome the temptations that meet you, clearing the obstacles which make a hurdle race of the heavenward path with hopeful-

ness and unselfishness, with reliance and decision, with love and endurance, you become daily stronger in grace. You develop spiritual firmness, you become less likely to be put out of joint. But for those who have suffered serious dislocation in faith or in obedience there is immediate healing at the hands of the Saviour of men. All the great facts of our redemption speak of healing. The Incarnation was just a cleansing of human flesh from its taint of corruption, so that by the operation of the Holy Ghost, Jesus was born without sin, and a new fount of humanity was made from whence healing influences might flow to sinful men. The death upon the cross speaks of healing. By His stripes we are healed. It is from the pierced side of the spotless Lamb of God that there flows the water and the blood to be the double cure of sin, releasing us both from guilt and uncleanness. The Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Coming of the Holy Ghost—what are they but the rising, never to set again, of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings? We may still pray in faith the prophet's prayer: "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed." But our prayer for healing will not be sincere unless we obey the plain mandate, "Make straight paths for your feet."

IV

THE SECRET OF HOLINESS

But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh ; for these are contrary the one to the other ; that ye may not do the things that ye would. But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like : of the which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they which practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance : against such there is no law. And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh, with the passions and the lusts thereof.—GAL. v. 16-24 (R.V.).

The Secret of Holiness

WE praise God for these words. Our hearts beat with new hope and fresh confidence as we listen to their splendid assurance of victory.

Here lies the secret of the progress of Christianity. A handful of Jews were able to turn the world upside down because, in addition to what they had learnt under the old covenant of the evil of sin and the blessedness of communion with God, the Gospel had brought the blessed assurance that man is no longer fatally handicapped in the struggle against evil, but can through Christ overcome.

To most, perhaps, the effect of these words is somewhat lessened by familiarity, even where, thank God, it has not been neutralized by unbelief. But think what it must have been in St. Paul's days. At that time sensuality was so strong that the most advanced teachers of morality dared not urge their disciples to continence, and directed their endeavours more to mitigating the evils of fornication than to doing away with it. Then came Christianity with its new standard and secret of holiness, and St. Paul, writing to these semi-barbarian Galatians, recently brought under the power of the Gospel, but finding themselves, with their hot Celtic blood, still subject to passions like other men, announces to them a way of complete deliverance and victory. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall in no wise fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Now whatever views men hold on disputed points of doctrine, all are agreed that practical holiness, the deliverance from the flesh with its passions and lusts, is, if not the entire *summum bonum*, at any rate an integral and essential part of it. As we read the sad catalogue of the works of the flesh, we hardly need the authoritative sentence which follows it, "I tell you, they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." We know that these are the very things that corrupt and destroy the life that now is. Misery, degradation, and despair follow inevitably in their track. So, too, when we read, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, temperance," it almost seems an anti-climax to say "Against such there is no law." We feel inclined to add, "For such the curse of sin has been removed, Paradise is restored, and they taste the joys of heaven on earth." But we drug our consciences with a convenient excuse which acts like a strong opiate; "I cannot help it," we say. "The works of the flesh are hateful and degrading, yet I cannot avoid them. Love, joy, peace are the things I most admire; but these and all the fruit of the Spirit are beyond my reach. So men sink back into the apathy born of despair, and try to cast the blame of their sins and shortcomings either upon Adam or upon God.

But the Gospel comes with a new message of hope. It was not needed to discover to men the beauty of holiness or the vileness of sin. Some of the most discriminating appreciations of moral goodness and some of the most forcible denunciations of human wickedness are found in non-Christian literature, but there is not a word as to any secret of deliverance from sin, there is not one sentence than can breathe hope into the oft defeated slave

of evil habit. The kingdom of God, however, is not in word but in power. It contains a power that can free men from the dominion of sin. The moral phenomenon of the new power for holiness which enters the lives of those who believe the Gospel is still an irresistible evidence for Christianity. We thank God, then, for the magnificent hopefulness of this passage.

We are equally glad to notice its perfect sanity, its freedom from all exaggeration. The Apostle is fully aware of the seriousness of the struggle. The ninth Article of Religion declares "that the infection of nature doth remain, yea even in them that are regenerated." To be regenerated is a deep and comprehensive term, it implies sanctification as well as justification. So this article teaches that even in the case of those who are sanctified the flesh is not eradicated. It lives on in the believer, and unless it is effectually overcome by some active resident force its workings in the way of passions and lusts will continually defile the heart and deflect the will. A clean heart, a heart set to obey, will never stay clean, will never remain fixed by itself, because the flesh is always working to break our communion with God. Heart purity is not a permanent effect but a maintained condition. The flesh is an enemy that has to be reckoned with, and the Holy Spirit is in us for this purpose, all the days of our earthly pilgrimage.

This is certainly the teaching of this passage. The plain statement made in verse 17 must not be explained away, as if it represented a state of things only possible in an unsanctified believer. The struggle there depicted—though, thank God, it takes place in the sub-conscious mind, in the case of all whose hearts are filled with the love of God, and therefore the believer abiding in Christ is not conscious of it, but only enjoys the rest which flows from the Holy Spirit's victory—is one which con-

tinues in all people however advanced they may be in love and knowledge.

In a modified sense the conflict goes on in all men. All men feel to some extent the superiority of virtue, and recognize some higher path to which conscience is ever urging them, but which the workings of the flesh, as inevitable as the law of gravity, hinder them from reaching up to. In the unregenerate the uplifting force is conscience, and its power is not great. In the child of God conscience is reinforced by the indwelling Holy Spirit; but though the forces on the side of good are then much stronger, the forces tending towards evil are increased in proportion, and in both alike the issue is the same. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that whatever the things are which ye may wish to do (and it is left uncertain purposely whether these are good things or bad things) ye may not do these."

This is the paradox with which we are all so familiar in daily life. Our aspirations after goodness perish at the birth. The more resolutions we make the more we break. Even after regeneration there is not in man himself any resultant force Godwards. If we succeed in avoiding the actual outward transgressions we think that we have done well. But under these conditions progress in holiness is impossible. The fruit of the Spirit cannot abound if all our energies are consumed in overcoming the works of the flesh. So if left to ourselves, growth in grace is impossible even for the regenerate, because the power of the indwelling spirit is neutralized by the power of the indwelling flesh.

This is a sober recognition of the true facts. St. Paul does not underrate, but fully admits the power of the enemy. But the admission does not in the

least overthrow the splendid promise of verse 16. We are not left to ourselves. The Holy Spirit is willing to take us by the hand, and if we thus walk, guided by the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Surely we shall examine the Apostle's remedy without prejudice, and accept it without reserve, when we realize how fairly and accurately he has diagnosed our desperate condition.

This remedy is set forth in the command, "Walk in the Spirit." And it is explained in the two pregnant sentences: "If ye be led by the Spirit ye are not under the law"; "They which are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." The guidance of the Holy Spirit is the secret of all vanquishing of the lust of the flesh. This guidance will always be marked by these two characteristics, it frees us from the law and keeps us near to the Cross.

Let no one think this reference to the law out of place. Holiness is impossible for those who are under the law. The repeated commands or prohibitions of the law, "*Thou shalt*," or "*Thou shalt not*," place the responsibility of obedience upon the sinner. They direct the sinner's attention to himself. They lead to confidence in the flesh. As long, therefore, as we are under the law we shall be under sin. For the law, however excellent and spiritual, is "weak through the flesh." It appeals to human strength. It makes a man lean upon a broken reed. Indeed, the law is the strength of sin. Sin is strong to overcome you as long as you are under the law. But "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Grace directs your attention to Jesus Christ. The law says, "*Thou shalt*." Grace says, "*Christ will*." Christ will cleanse, Christ will help, Christ will fill, Christ

will undertake. When, therefore, you find yourself under law, saying, "I must try harder, I really must do better," you are not being led by the Spirit; when led by the Spirit the motto of your life will be "Not I, but Christ."

But see the second mark of the guidance of the Spirit. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts." Why does St. Paul drag in that word crucified? Why, in a context wholly occupied with the antagonism of the flesh and the Spirit, this abrupt reference to the Cross? Because St. Paul could never for any length of time keep it from his thoughts. Are you Christ's? Why, if so, are you Christ's? Because you gave your heart to Him and made a full consecration of your life to His service? This is a secondary reason, but the main reason is this, "Because Christ died for you." Christ crucified for us is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. On the Cross Christ satisfied on my behalf the law's demands, and the Holy Spirit claims my emancipation from the law and its condemnation by reminding me that Christ died for me. What happens then? Why, the Cross slays my sins. They that are Christ's have, by virtue of their union with a crucified Saviour, crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts. When we believe Christ died for us, when we accept a free pardon for our sins, purchased by His blood, the virtue of Christ's death passes into our souls and a moral crucifixion of sin takes place in our hearts. The scene of the Cross is repeated, so to speak, inwardly in our hearts. The nails that pierced our Saviour's hands and feet now pierce our consciences and transfix our selfishness and love of sin. Our old man is crucified with Christ. The chief weapon used by the Holy Spirit to free us from the dominion of sin is the Cross of

Jesus Christ. These are two plain marks of the Spirit's guidance, this is how He secures our deliverance from sin, by drawing us away from the law and by keeping us very close to a crucified Saviour.

What do you know of this deliverance? Have you learned to walk in the Spirit? Walking is not wandering, it implies a definite direction. Walking is not idling, it implies persistent endeavour. Walking is not marking time, it implies steady progress. Walking in the Spirit or by the Spirit implies that you have abandoned all confidence in yourself and have given yourself up to the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. It certainly implies the diligent use of all the means of grace which the Spirit delights to use. If prayer and Bible study, the preaching of the Gospel and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are neglected there will be no walking in the Spirit.

But all who are born of the Spirit may learn to walk by the Spirit. So we are not doomed to a hopeless conflict. There is complete deliverance from the lust of the flesh by simply walking in the Spirit. For the heart thus led is so taken up with Christ that the love of sin is banished from it. Yes, the triumph of Calvary and the gift of the Holy Ghost have completely changed the believer's relationship to sin. We are not doomed to hopeless conflict with nothing but failure before us. For every believer there is victory over the lust of the flesh, but only in one way. Not by a course of repression and coercion, but by yielding to God and walking in the Spirit. The spiritual strength of the regenerate is not itself able to overcome the flesh. Nor can the fruit of the Spirit spring from human endeavours. But the Comforter is come, the living Christ is close at hand. Walk by the Spirit, abide in Christ, yield yourselves to God, and

you will be divinely delivered. The workings of the self-life shall be consistently put to death, and neither in thought or desire or deed shall you fulfil the lust of the flesh. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live."

V

IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him. . . . Hitherto ye have asked nothing in My name. At that day ye shall ask in My name.—COL. iii. 17 ; JOHN xvi. 24, 26.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus

SO Jesus Christ is to be supreme over every department of daily life. We must give up the common fiction that Divine service commences at eleven o'clock on Sunday morning and closes about half-past twelve. For all who name the name of Jesus, Divine service is going on every hour of every day. Every word that cannot be spoken in His name must be left unsaid, every deed not to His glory must be left undone. There must be no independent Free State within the Empire of the Crucified. He is the Lord Jesus, Sovereign as well as Saviour. "To this end" He "died and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living." Just as every post office and mailcart throughout the Empire bears the royal initials E.R. or V.R., so the sign of the Crucified should be stamped upon our daily conduct, and every transaction that is not after the pattern of Calvary should be ruled out of our lives.

Does this seem to be asking too much? Is it an exaggerated and unreasonable demand? Or do you deem it impossible? A magnificent ideal, but beyond our level? A romance of angelic perfection, but utterly impossible for fallen men? Or do some think such a course of life undesirable,

lacking in variety or relish and full of tedious dullness? On the contrary, the Scripture teaches and the experience of God's people amply proves that a life lived altogether in the name of the Lord Jesus, a life of which Jesus Christ is the centre and the circumference, the impelling motive and the all-pervading atmosphere, is not unreasonable or impossible or undesirable, it is brought within the reach of every believer by the gift of the Holy Ghost, and it is a life of heaven on earth.

Some of the early converts from heathenism, so we are told, used at the time of their baptism to keep the right arm out of the water in order that with that arm they might work those very deeds of vengeance which in their baptism they promised to renounce. There are many like these to-day, many half-baptized Christians, who leave a considerable part of their being outside the control of Jesus Christ.

They begin with their brains. Every man, they say, has a right to think as he likes, and many who condemn loose or free living see no harm in loose or free thinking. Then they go on to their business. A man must make money as best he can, if he does not make it for himself no one will make it for him. So they labour for the meat which perisheth and leave their basket and store, their practice or their exchange transactions, outside the control of Jesus Christ. Then comes a third step. Every man has a right to spend his own money as he pleases. So their pleasures and recreations, their eating and drinking, their spending and investing of their wealth, are all outside the control of Jesus Christ.

All such reasoning is fundamentally wrong. The principle upon which it rests is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the New Testament. St. Paul says the exact opposite: "Ye are not your own,

for ye were bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body which is His."

He is dealing with the awful licentiousness of the heathen world. He is writing to the Church in Corinth, a city which had gained a disgraceful notoriety for its abandonment to the most degrading forms of vice. A city in which immorality of the worst kind, instead of hiding away under cover of night, was regarded as part of the religious life of the city and found a home in the magnificent temples that adorned its principal streets. In the most effectual and pure manner the Apostle grapples with this sin, changing the bare prohibition, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," into the glowing words, "Glorify God in your body." He lays down, first of all, the central fact of Redemption. "Ye were bought with a price." From this he draws the leading doctrine which is the foundation of Christian ethics: "Ye are not your own." Then he applies this general doctrine to the particular sins of Corinth: "Therefore glorify God in your body." Such is Christianity in its solidity and strength. The facts of the Manger and the Cross supply the rock foundation. The doctrines which spring from these solid facts capture the conscience, move the heart, and compel men to surrender to Jesus Christ.

The command, "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," follows at once from the truth, "Ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price." It is the only reasonable inference from the sacred facts. Ye are not your own. Christ has bought you and all your rights. I plead the sacred rights of Him who suffered at Calvary. It is His right to reign. Your rights must all give way to His. You are a pensioner on the bounty of Heaven. Like the firstborn of Israel, delivered from destruction by the blood of

the Passover Lamb, the Cross which effects your discharge from condemnation purchases you for God. You cannot by any reasonable pretext, while receiving your Father's bounty, contract yourself out of His service. How dare you, since the blood of Jesus is your only shelter from condemnation, live a single hour as if you were your own? It comes to this then, that no one can be a Christian for any selfish or secondary motive. We yield to Christ because we cannot help ourselves, the logic of the Cross, the spell of the Crucified, are irresistible.

Some years ago, a young lady in Aberdeen, speaking to a minister, made the following *naïve* confession: "I should not mind being a real Christian, an out-and-out Christian, if I might have a fortnight's holiday every year." She knew perfectly well that the idea was absurd. It is all holiday, in one sense, when the love of Christ constraineth us. But there can be no playing fast and loose with the Lord Jesus. The Scotch minister answered very readily: "Do you suppose I would have taken my wife on those conditions? Would any husband be satisfied that his wife should be for fifty weeks in the year loving and loyal and then go and play with other lovers the remaining two weeks?" This lady misconceived the nature of true religion. She thought she would screw up her courage to do and bear God's painful will for the rest of the year if she might have her own sweet will for one fortnight. But true religion is love. And love lasts. Love does not find obedience tedious. Love wants no holiday.

So true religion is learned only at the Cross. We begin to love when we learn how He first loved us. We lose our own names at the Cross and begin to do all in His name; just as the wife loses her name

when she is married and begins to do all in the name of her husband. At Calvary Christ took our place and our name. He died as a sinner and a criminal. He died as our representative and substitute. He gave His life a ransom for us. When we really believe that, then and then only are we real Christians. And then we have no choice left ; we would be beyond all measure dishonourable and base and contemptible if we did not live unto Him. Yes, the bonds which bind us to Jesus Christ can never be loosened. An English gentleman may accept a post in the army and then, if his military duties interfere with his health or domestic happiness, he may resign the king's commission. A cabinet minister or a member of parliament may do the same, and no one cries shame upon them if they seek to be relieved of burdens which they undertook for king and country. But whatever the claims of country and sovereign they are not to be compared with the claims of Jesus Christ. Our King shed His blood and died for us. So another Scripture says, " Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought (it is not the heroic achievement of a few but the common duty of every Christian) to lay down our lives for the brethren." Our lives are not our own ; our time, our strength, our money, our brains are not our own. All belong to the King who laid down His life for us. It is only reasonable, therefore, that " Whatsoever we do in word or deed " we should " do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

And it is by no means impossible. It is a matter not so much of outward profession as of inward motive. It is not merely saying grace at meals, it is eating and drinking to the glory of God. It is not so much using pious phrases in our speech (though we ought to say, if the Lord will), it is

dealing kindly and truly with all we meet. It is not that the name of Jesus will be always on our lips, but that the thought of pleasing Him will be at the back of all we do.

It means that Jesus Christ supplies the master motive of our lives. We all know the influence of a new motive. Here is a young man with no particular object in life. He is just drifting along and doing as others do, without any aim or purpose or ambition. But a new object captures his heart. It may be some prize in athletics or some chance of commercial success. Perhaps it is some sweet Christian maid who has unconsciously cast her spell over him and he longs to prove worthy of her and to win her. The new motive affects at once his whole manner of life. The idling, the indifference, the slackness, all disappear, and he begins to be in earnest. He does not tell people about his new ambition. They very likely discover it, but he as far as possible keeps it to himself. But the new prize has won his heart and continually in secret he renews his allegiance to it and allows it to control all his actions. So is it with the love of Christ. When Jesus Christ becomes fully known He casts such a spell over us, that the thought of pleasing Him is never absent from us, and without any parade and almost unconsciously we do all in His name.

It is the old truth, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." Look at that young mother with the cradle at her side. A few months ago the magazine which lies upon her lap would have engrossed her whole attention. But now, her treasure is in that cradle and no story however fascinating can turn her from it. Her heart is in that cradle too. When Christ becomes your greatest treasure, then you will have learned the

art of concentration, yea such concentration will be nature and not art to you.

But how can this be? How can Christ become so real to us that He should be more than business or home or fatherland, so that we do all in His name? At present the rival interests of life compete only too successfully, and it is only now and then in the quiet of some inner chamber or in the hush of some solemn service that we realize that Jesus Christ is really all in all. How are we to lose our own names and do all really in His? Some clergy begin their sermons by saying, "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," but this does not keep their own personalities from being sometimes only too apparent.

Our Lord's own words supply the answer. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name." "In that day ye shall ask in My name." What then lay between? What would be the secret of this new departure in the prayers of the disciples? Such a new departure in prayer would clearly involve a similar new departure in their whole inner life. For our prayers are the index of our hearts. Our prayers are homogeneous with our lives. What led the Apostles into the blessed experience of living in the name of Jesus and praying in the name of Jesus? Pentecost did it. There was no praying in the name of Jesus until they were filled with the Holy Ghost. The baptism of the Spirit is just the submersion, the drowning of the self-life. We lose our names at the Cross. Yes, that is true, but we too often pick them up again. If we are to keep crucified with Christ, if we are so to lose for ever our own names that the name of Christ fills our whole thought, and any ecclesiastical or political or personal addition seems an intolerable impertinence, we

must be filled with the Holy Ghost. Then "it becomes an instinct and a joy to us to do all in His name. We cannot do it by the discipline of rigid rules or by forcing ourselves into a round of religious duties. We can do it as under the teaching of the Holy Spirit the beauty of the Saviour is so clearly and fully revealed to us that the desire of pleasing Him becomes the ruling passion of our life. Then all other rivals lose their power. We shall love our home, but Christ will come before wife or child. We shall be diligent in business, but Christ will be far more than silver and gold. We shall be loyal patriots and good Churchmen, but Christ will come before country or Church.

And oh the blessedness of such a life. Some lives are very full, but very empty—full of toil and strain and magnificent endeavours, but empty of satisfaction and pure joy. The satisfaction that is found in any act depends upon the purity of the motive. Not a cup of cold water given for Christ's sake will lose its reward, and the Lord's rewards are not all held back till we reach heaven. There is no emptiness or dissatisfaction in the life that is lived in His name.

It is the cure for that curse of indifference that is blighting so many lives. Yes, many small corner Christians who think their part in life so insignificant that it does not matter whether they fulfil it faithfully or unfaithfully, are brought out into a large room of sober joy and holy liberty when they realize that the very washing of the cups and the mending of the linen can be done in His name. It is not "whether ye work a parish or rule a household" but "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And it leads to giving thanks. A constant stream of joyful thanksgiving, the tribute of a free glad heart, is poured

out from such a life. There can be no murmuring or complaining, there can be no deadness or gloom, when the sweet music of the name of Jesus is soothing your tired spirit and waking a responsive echo from your attuned heart. May the Holy Spirit teach us every day to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

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